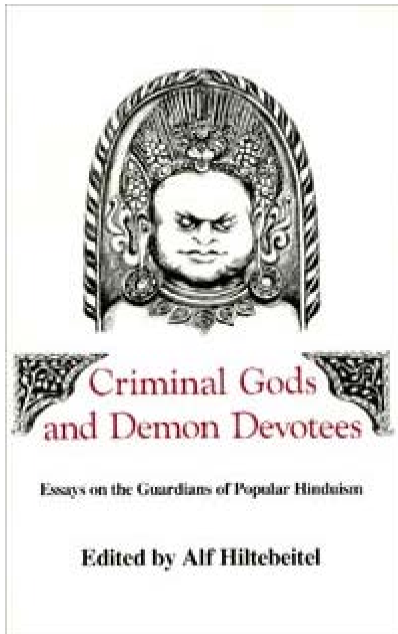


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Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees

Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism

Alf Hiltebeitel, Editor

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Note on Transliteration

The individual authors of this volume have generally determined the degree to which they adopted the precise scholarly conventions for the Indian languages they cited, or used Anglicized forms instead. The editor has, however, sought to bring about a basic consistency in Sanskrit and Tamil citations (for reasons of economy, the subscripted macron has been normally dropped from the Tamil consonants usually printed l, r, and n). There has also been some regularization of Hindi, Marathi, and Telugu terms used in more than one article.

Preface

This collection of essays takes its inception from the editor's proposal to the Conference on Religion in South India (CRSI) in Spring 1984 that its next annual meeting be held on the theme that survives as the lead title of this book. The CRSI deserves the thanks of all involved for accepting and sponsoring the resultant program, and I would like to thank in particular Harry M. Buck and Paul B. Courtright, who in that year passed the CRSI chairmanship from the one to the other, for their help in encouraging and organizing the meeting. Held at the George Washington University from 7-9 August 1985, that productive conference featured the initial working drafts of the majority of these essaysthose by Biardeau, Shulman, Narayana Rao, Erndl, Coccari, Stanley, Hiltebeitel, Hudson, and Waghorneas well as memorable discussions catalyzed by the meeting's two designated discussants, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty and Glenn Yocum. In

addition, Sontheimer's essay comes to this book as the descendant of a paper he would have presented at that conference had he not been unable to attend it. And Masilamani-Meyer's essay arrives as a follow-up to inquiries about the conference.

Beyond the 1985 CRSI, the book has also had a chance to ripen and grow through two more conferences. At the November 1985 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion at Anaheim, California, the panel organized by David Knipe on "Dialogues with the Disgruntled Dead" featured not only the first draft of his essay in this volume, but a chance for Coccari and Hiltebeitel to review their initial papers in relation to additional material. And the November 1986 Annual South Asia Conference at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, featured three panels on transgressive sacrality originally spearheaded by Sunthar Visuvalingam and chaired by Hiltebeitel, at which initial drafts of both Sunthar and Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam's papers were read along with reworkings by Narayana Rao and Hiltebeitel of their initial papers, and commentary by Knipe and

discussion with Coccari, Erndl, and Stanley. Finally, Lorenzen's essay comes as a spinoff of the Madison conference as a paper originally solicited for it by Sunthar Visuvalingam. Further unity to the book has thus been enhanced by the fact that all the essayists have taken stock of the discussion of transgressive sacrality, either at the Madison conference or through correspondence or conversations with the Visuvalingams, or with each other, with some having reflected on it in their papers.

Introduction

Alf Hiltebeitel

It is no doubt best to begin with some preliminary and minimal definitions. "Criminal gods"if we can take the term *criminal* metaphorically, and extend it beyond societies with legal systems that give the term a technical applicationare perhaps a worldwide phenomenon: gods who violate the sacred codes and boundaries by which other gods, and humans, would seek to live. What is specific to the "criminal gods" of Hinduism is the specifically Indian codes they violatesocietal, sexual, theological, culinary, sacrificialand the ways they violate them. "Demon Devotees," on the other hand, are perhaps uniquely Indian (though not necessarily uniquely Hindu), for their mythologies are shaped by a theology of *bhakti*,or devotion, in which the gods repeatedly convert their demon adversariessometimes by defeating them, but more often by killing them (implying the principle of reincarnation)into their devotees. Because demons are also violators of sacred codes and boundaries, and because criminals can be regenerated too, there is bound to be overlap between these two types. The terms are not employed in this volume to fix these types, or even further to define them, but to draw our contributors into a common discussion of the problematics that surround such figures in the Hindu tradition. These problematics are best introduced by some discussion of the various papers.

Given the South Indian focus of the initial Conference on Religion in South India at which most of these papers were first read, and the resultantly large number focused on Tamilnadu, the essays are ordered to begin in Tamilnadu and return to it after a sort of counterclockwise tour of the subcontinent. This *apradaksina* or reverse ritual circumambulation is perhaps fittingly inauspicious for our "criminal" and

"demonic" subjects, but its real purpose is to enable a certain order in the movement from paper to paper. It should also be noted that there is no pretension to covering the whole subcontinent by this progression. A selective bibliography can be consulted for further readings in some of the areas omitted, most notably Bengal, Central India, Karnataka, and

Kerala. 1

Madeleine Biardeau's "Brahmans and Meat-Eating Gods" opens the book for the same reason that it was the keynote paper at the 1985 CRSI conference. It is Biardeau whose work on the minor carnivorous gods who guard local goddesses, and whose myths frequently tell how they became those goddesses' devotees, has opened a number of major pathways into the interpretation of such figures. Her essay shares something of her own discovery of their significance. To Biardeau, they are not to be understood as isolated and outwardly deformed expressions of a popular, folk, or Dravidian religion that has somehow remained at its heart unviolated by the various forms of India's high or great tradition (that is, via Sanskritization, Brahmanization, Puranicization, et cetera). The view derived from such turn-of-the-century works as those of Oppert, Whitehead, and Elmore that the goal of research is to isolate the original non-acculturated component in such figures is implicitly rejected. Nor does Biardeau start from the premise that they are expressions of an alternate cultural dynamic, a strain of folk counter-culture within yet in some opposition to the larger whole (an approach that has some currency today among folklorists). Rather, Biardeau argues that such figures are best understood, in terms of her essay in this volume, in relation to the "whole of Hinduism," the inherent dynamicssocial, theological, and historicalthat sustain the unity of the Hindu tradition itself in both "its superior and inferior forms." To begin with, this means interpreting the mythical and cultic roles of these meat-eating gods in their rapport with Brahmanical values as seen, first of all, through the parts played by Brahmans in the same myths and cults. More than this, Biardeau attempts to demonstrate that the rapport between Brahmans and meat-eating gods is in certain cases worked out through mythic and ritual symbols that derive ultimately from the concrete apparatus of Vedic ritual: in this essay, most notably in connection with the *Asvamedha* or Vedic Horse Sacrifice, and more generally in relation to the Vedic sacrificial post, the *yupa*.The ultimately Vedic themes do not, however, descend directy into these folk cults, but through the medium of a bhakti rereading of the Vedic revelation which these popular cults carry forward, much transformed but with the traces of the transformations

still discernible, from the initial bhakti mythologies of the epics and Puranas. Thus the rationale behind Biardeau's discussion of crushing goat heads in relation to themes of the *Mahabharata*,and of Kattavarayan in relation to the classical figure of Kartavirya Arjuna.

Biardeau's brief discussion of Kattavarayan serves to introduce the focal figure of the two following essays by David Shulman and Eveline Masilamani-Meyer. As a cluster, these three opening essays provide the first extensive scholarly investigation of the remarkable folk corpus that surrounds this figure, who serves admirably to launch discussion of many facets of the Criminal God and Demon Devotee problematic. Indeed, in certain respects Kattavarayan provides the perfect starting point, because he more than any other single figure discussed in this book seems to *combine* traits of the criminal (as M. Arunachalam called him) 2 god with those of the demon devotee (as argued by Biardeau, who sees him as the demon Kartavirya converted). In all, the first three essays introduce Kattavarayan through three variants of his temple ritual (two in Biardeau's discussion, one in Masilamani-Meyer's) and through both local oral (Biardeau) and literary versions of his mythology (two by Shulman, three by Masilamani-Meyer, with a major one in common).

The text which both Shulman and Masilamani-Meyer discuss in common is the most widely circulated published chapbook version of Kattavarayan's story, the *Kattavarayacuvami Katai* (henceforth *Katai*).Masilamani-Meyer has in fact completed a translation of this text, and is preparing it for publication. Shulman also discusses another chapbook version of the story in the form of a drama, and Masilamani-Meyer two versions from palm leaf manuscripts.

From Shulman's essay, which takes the *Katai* as its main text, one can become familiar with Kattavarayan through this vulgate edition. Shulman provides a rich account of its version of his myth and a penetrating discussion of its major themes: the ambiguities of guarding and protecting; Kattavarayan's concealed affinities and identities with Brahman, king, and Untouchable; his mockery of Brahmans; his use of magic to conquer other magicians; the sexual tensions implied in his relations with his multiple fathers, mothers, and wives; the specific ambiguities of his obsession, as a seeming Untouchable, with the Brahman girl Ariyamalai that results in something of an abduction, a rape, and an unconsummatable marriage, and his ultimate destiny on the sacrificial stake; the ardency of his wives' lamentation; his double ambiance as boundary marker and boundary transgressor, encompasser and encompassed. As Shulman notes,

Kattavarayan shares much of this dossier with other "criminal" heroes. But Shulman observes that this text, in contrast to the drama, also shows Kattavarayan with unique traits besides: his Trickster-like transformability, his "permanent transience," his last trick being his mastery over his own impalement. He is the lone and alienated hero, severed from his divine parents Siva and the goddess, their reunion requiring his ordeal. And his voluntary self-victimization elicits a kind of cathartic bhakti, exemplified by the lamentations of his wives as he diesbut doesn't really dieon the stake. And further in this vein, because the text works out its bhakti themes primarily in relation to Kattavarayan (whom it elevates, in effect, to an identity with Siva's more Brahmanically recognized son Murukan), Shulman argues that Kattavarayan, at least in this text, "is not an exemplar of bhakti directed toward a higher deity."

In large measure, Masilamani-Meyer's essay confirms Shulman's sense for the uniqueness of the *Katai's* portrayal of Kattavarayan, and also, by comparing it further with the two palm leaf versions, offers an interpretation of the cultural and religious dynamics behind his changing face. The most striking contrast is in the bhakti structures of the two texts. The primary palm leaf version repeatedly highlights Kattavarayan's devotion to his mother, the goddess: throughout his career he makes continuous puja offerings to her (be it noted that he also goes at least this far in the *Katai*),and sets up her temples. He has no identity with Murukan, and rather than being a god throughout his career who will play his last trump on the stake, his divinity comes about as an apotheosis through his *true* death and rebirth on the stake. And rather than separating him from Siva and the goddess as the focus of a bhakti devoted to himself alone, his ordeal brings his cult into a rapport with that of these higher deities (his mother the goddess, his father Siva, and in fact the whole Trimurti), who through his death agree to accept offerings from his devotees, with he himself, their impure guard and soldier, as intermediary. Further in the same vein, the palm leaf versions clarify the links between Kattavarayan's mythology and the cult of the Seven Virgins. And finally, Kattavarayan is presented as a god whom all castes may worship, with no special anti-Brahman slant evident in his tricks such as there is, in a quite outspoken form, in the *Katai*.Masilamani-Meyer interprets these contrasts against the background of changing social conditions, and leaves a quite haunting sense of what is being lost and gained in the process. In terms of the distinctions between oral, palm leaf, and printed versions, it is clear that as an example of the latter, although the *Katai* has been able to take on a literary life of its own, it is also the most detached from the cult.

Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Knipe's papers follow the Coromandal coast up to Andhra Pradesh. Yet along with their pairing as discussions of Telugu popular culture, each essay also clusters significantly with those that bracket this Andhra pair. Narayana Rao's Katamaraju has certain similarities with Kattavarayan which I will discuss in a moment. And with Knipe's and Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam's papers, we meet in Virabhadra and Bhairava the two wrathful forms of Siva from the pan-Indian Sanskritic tradition whom regional popular cults and mythologies so often connect, in various ways and guises, with our criminal gods and demon devotees. Indeed, each author takes up ways in which the Sanskritic mythologies of these gods take root in regional folk cults that virtually overlap with other popular traditions of these types.

One of my not-so-hidden agendas in bringing together essays on Kattavarayan and Katamaraju for this book, and the initial conference that set it in motion, has been to raise the possibility that the two figures might be related. Because none of our authors have taken up this issue, either to pursue the possibility or rule it out, a few words are in order. At this point, a genetic connection between the two mythologies seems unlikely but still tantalizing in its possibilities. A major reason to discard the whole issue is that to pursue the apparent similarity in names, one would have to explain the difference in the "t's": dental in Kattavarayan, retroflex in Katamaraju. This does not seem possible, and moreover, each name finds an easy etymology that incorporates these differences: Kattavarayan from *ka*,"to guard or protect" (see Shulman's discussion), and Katamaraju from *kadu*,"forest" (see Narayana Rao). Yet as Shulman points out, the forest is Kattavarayan's "natural domain," and he has several epithets that mean "the lord who guards the wilderness." And conversely, Narayana Rao brings out Katamaraju's protective-guardian aspect in a most provocative manner (reminiscent of Krsna in the *Mahabharata*),linking it with the extreme readiness of cowherd-warrior-kings to offer refuge to those who seek their protection (*saranagata raksana*).This brings up a second point where the two mythologies seem to be far apart, for whereas the whole Katamaraju cycle revolves around Golla-Yadava cowherds, with Katamaraju as this community's chief divine hero, the story of Kattavarayan has next to nothing to do with cowherds. But again, the little that it has is intriguing. At least in the *Katai*,Kattavarayan is linked with cowherds through his cross cousin (i.e., legitimate) marriage with his *Konar* (herder) junior wife Karuppalaki. Could he be her cross-cousin without being in

some undeclared

sense a Konar himself? More than this, as Shulman notes, there is a recurrent incorporation into Kattavarayan's mythology of traits from that arch cowherd-"trickster" (or better cattleherder-Ksatriya-"trickster") Krsna. The Katamaraju story, on the other hand, leaves no doubt about its hero's affinities with Krsna: at one point, Katamaraju proves that he is Krsna himself (though as Narayana Rao points out, he also has links with Siva). Narayana Rao thus shows that Katamaraju's ambiguities and trickeries must be interpreted in a specific socio-mythical context, one that seems remote from Kattavarayan. But it is worth noting that Kattavarayan's "permanent transience" remains a fitting description of the fort-rejecting pastoralist ambience exalted for and by Katamaraju.

Leaving genetic links between these two mythologies aside, a few words may be offered on further thematic linksritual as well as mythicbetween Katamaraju and other figures dealt with in this book. I restrict myself to the scene that opens Narayana Rao's discussion, in which the seven year old Katamaraju confronts the goddess Ganga when he goes to the battlefield at midnight to look for his father's corpse. The warfield here is not only the venue in which he meets Ganga, but also Poturaju, the younger brother and guardian not only of Ganga but of numerous other Andhra village goddesses. We will meet Poturaju again in this book under the Tamil form Pottu Raja as a guardian of the goddess Draupadi (see Hiltebeitel's article). Now in the Telugu story, Ganga demands non-vegetarian food from Katamaraju for herself and Poturaju: a sheep (or goat) tall as a palm tree and rice high as a mountain. This is Poturaju's common fare in Telugu myths. More than this, it is also, in a Draupadi cult myth, the food that Pottu Raja under the name Pormannan demands for himself from Krsna before he will serve the goddess Draupadi on the battlefield of the Mahabharata war. 3 Because Katamaraju reveals himself to be a multiform of Krsna, we thus have similar configurations. In each case, over-seeing the battlefield requires non-vegetarian food, but with different accents. In the Tamil story, Pormannan is the newcomer-guardian to whom Krsna supplies such fare so that Pormannan will be the goddess's battlefield guardian, and also, implicitly, so that the vegetarian Draupadi won't have to eat meat herself. In the Telugu story, Poturaju, already in the goddess's service, objects only to extending that service to the warfield. Here the newcomerwho as the Krsna figure is more than the goddess's guardian, though he seems to take on that role as wellsupplies the food so that Ganga and Poturaju, both meat-eaters, will watch over the battlefield on behalf of the

Gollas. Moreover, the appearance which Ganga presents to Katamaraju on the battlefield is one that holds certain reminders of the story of Kattavarayan. Ganga tests Katamaraju's resolve, and seeks to terrify him, by appearing with spears projecting from her head, on which numerous elephants and other corpses are impaled. Here again the hero's tricks involve a confrontation with the goddess and a variation on the impalement stake. Once Ganga has transformed herself from this horrendous form into a twelve year old girl and been tricked into bowing to Katamaraju, Katamaraju is faced with a prospect that is ultimately little more attractive than impalement. This dangerous girl wants to marry him. The double implication in this sequence that impalement equals marriage, and further a return to the mother, is not to be missed here any more than in the Kattavarayan story (see S. Visuvalingam in this volume). What is different, and striking, is that Katamaraju uses his cleverness to avoid these pitfalls whereas Kattavarayan is ineluctably drawn toward them. 4 The result in one case is an ambiguous marriage that is not a real marriage, and in the other a non-marriage that is all too real.

Like Narayana Rao's paper, Knipe's takes us to a figure who, although he bears affinities with others discussed in this volume, also requires us to look at such affinities from an oblique angle. The Virabhadra cult of coastal Andhra (East Godavari District), which Knipe seems virtually to have (in scholarly terms) discovered one noisy fall night in 1980, links this wrathful projection of Siva with the outrage of the disgruntled dead: the prematurely and deviant dead, and especially children, excluded from ancestral rites for deceased Fathers (and wives). Initially known through their possession of family members who remain alive, such undeparted spirits are known as *virabhadras* (with girls sometimes called *virakanyakas*),and are commemorated in the remarkable *linga*-shaped"ash-fruit" icons that grow through the attentions they receive in their cult. The central event of the cult takes the form of nocturnal processions, most notably at Mahasivaratri, in which the ash-fruits are taken out, possession by the raging virabhadras is invited, and Virabhadra's own dance of destruction may be impersonated. It is to be noted that except for such deceased and living

personifications, Virabhadra is not (or at least does not seem to be) a focus of iconic representation in the cult (the giant processional icon in plate 12 is of Siva). The cult's main temple in Rajahmundry houses ash-fruit virabhadras, but no Virabhadra icon as such. So we do not see him, as we often do elsewhere, in a typical temple guardian role.5 Yet guardian and protector functions are hardly absent. As

their leader and prototype, Virabhadra protects the "children of rage," who are themselves incipient gods and goddesses. Among the officiants in his processions are current-day stand-ins for the Viramusti, a name traditionally belonging to a caste that is reputed in earlier periods to have performed the tasks of guarding temples, monasteries, processional icons, and those who wear the *lingam*. 6But most intriguing in this regard are some implications of Knipe's insights into the correspondence between Virabhadra's leadership of these nighttime processions and the Sanskritic mythologies of Virabhadra and the destruction of Daksa's sacrifice. If with Bhairava (and many other guardian gods), we see a multiform of Siva at the margins of the temple protecting the deity within, and the principle of sacrifice which the temple and deity incarnate, then with Virabhadra we see something quite different. Rather than the guardian turned outward to protect, Virabhadra is the guardian turned inward to destroy. Still, he protects the sacrifice by destroying and then restoring the sacrifice that has, in effect, gone wrong: in the myth, the sacrifice of Daksa that results in the ultimate perversion, the sacrifice of the goddess herself, Siva's wife Sati; and in the Andhra cult, the Vedic funerary rituals that reduce the disgruntled dead to leftovers, yet leave remainders which, as Knipe so nicely shows, become the growing icons that are themselves multiforms of the ritual apparatus that rejects them.

Chalier Visuvalingam's paper takes us not only from Virabhadra to Bhairava, but into a cluster of four papers that share with hers either a common concern with Bhairava (in the case of Lorenzen and Erndl), or with traditions of Varanasi-Banaras (as with Coccari). Further, with the exception of Lorenzen's paper, which deals with newly discovered data that are primarily, but not exclusively, South Indian, the main focus of this cluster marks a tour through the North.

Although the chief focus of Chalier Visuvalingam's extensive fieldwork on Bhairavaat least to the point of writinghas been Nepal and Varanasi, the paper takes as its point of departure Bhairava's more pan-Indian Sanskritic and Brahmanical dimensions: his puranic origin myth as the severer of the fifth head of Brahma. Chalier Visuvalingam argues that the myth of this ultimate crime, Brahmanicide, situates Bhairava between a "social point of view which must necessarily condemn [him] to be an outcaste heretic criminal and the esoteric valorization of transgressive sacrality that exalts" his supremacy. In relation to what both the Visuvalingams call the dialectic of transgressive sacrality, the essay pursues Bhairava, and the elusive fifth head of Brahma that clings to him so tenaciously, through a vast tapestry

of prefigurations, transformations, multiforms, and analogues, from the center of Hinduism to its peripheries. As with Biardeau (and others in this volume), Chalier Visuvalingam seeks to relate the phenomena under study to the whole of Hinduism, from roots in the Vedic revelation (again, including the sacrificial stake and its multiforms) through epic and popular expressions, and also, with far greater emphasis than Biardeau, in Tantric and tribal manifestations as well. The heuristic, however, is different, for it is claimed of the dialectic of transgressive sacrality that it "encompasses" the "bhakti universe" which Biardeau places at the nerve center of such transformations, and that in effect it requires its "deconstruction." Be that as it may, at the core of Chalier Visuvalingam's interpretation of Bhairava are the royal implications of his Brahmanicide. These are traced in their symbolic background (linked in myth to the figure of Indra, the Vedic god of war and Ksatriya king par excellence) to the initiatory scenario of the hypothetically reconstructed figure of the pre-classical Vedic royal *diksita* (a king consecrated to be the patron of a sacrifice), who in the transgressive notations of his embryogonic death-and-rebirth is assimilated to a Brahman as both Brahman-slayer and Brahman-victim. And on the level of Hinduism as observed, the transgressive complex surrounding Bhairava is explored in relation to "the problem of the Mahabrahmana," whom Chalier Visuvalingam treats as a "dialectical figure" in relation to others, but who in himself is the Brahman funerary priest who impersonates the deceased in the rituals that enact the latter's death-and-rebirth, devours his or her sins, is both pure and impure, executioner and victim, and assimilated symbolically to a royal Untouchable. One important feature of this essay in relation to others in this volume is thus its exploration of the theme of initiatic death-and-rebirth in relation to the transformation from criminal/demon to god/devotee. The initiatory scenario is a tacit theme in the mythologies and cults of such figures as Kattavarayan and Potu Raju-

Pormannan (see Hiltebeitel and S. Visuvalingam in this volume). In the embryogonic death of Bhairava, the "royal" Brahmanicide, at Varanasi, it takes on an explicit centrality.

Chalier Visuvalingam's essay introduces a group of ascetics from the late classical through medieval periods of Hinduism called Kapalikas who took the Brahmanicide Sivaor Siva in his Brahmanicide form as Bhairavaas their divine model: like Siva-Bhairava, they undertook a Great Penance of bearing a skull begging bowl (the skull, *kapala*,being ideally or at least symbolically that of a Brahman, and linked mythically with the fifth head of Brahma) along with a skull-topped

staff (*khatvanga*).It is David Lorenzen who wrote the pioneer work on the Kapalikas, and Lorenzen follows Chalier Visuvalingam's study with an updating of his earlier discussion of this sect in the light of previously unnoticed and new data. The recent discovery of Saivite tantric texts describing Kapalika worship and observances and newly found inscriptional evidence of donations to and from Kapalika ascetics together confirm the actual organizational and institutional existence of the sect, which until recently remained uncertain. Lorenzen remarks on evidence from one early (sixth century) inscription from Karnataka that the Kapalikas would have included Brahmans versatile in Vedic literature and rituals, in particular the Vedic Soma sacrifice, which may itself have provided one level of meaning to the apparently esoteric Kapalika doctrine called *Somasiddhanta*.Also intriguing is the new inscriptional evidence from eleventh century Andhra that along with the six insignia (*mudra*)that adorned the Kapalika's person, he would hold not only the skull bowl and staff but the hourglass shaped *damaruga* (Sanskrit *damaru*)drum, the barrel shaped *mrdanga* drum, and apparently some kind of trumpet. As Lorenzen says, musical instruments are often associated with Saivite ascetics. More than this, the damaru is borne by the *dancing* Siva and is used in popular Hinduism in possession rituals, whereas the Kapalika's khatvanga is also linked with ecstatic behavior and is said to dance on its own. 7 This group of *five* instruments might be recalled in connection with the discussion in my article of the myths that connect Potu Raju-Pormannan with five ritual instrumentslinked again with possession and the dancein the South Indian Draupadi cult.

Also briefly introduced by Chalier Visuvalingam is the subject of Kathleen Erndl's essay: a cult of Jammu District, Kashmir, in which Bhairava (Bhairõ) is linked with the goddess Vaisno Devi. The fundamental opposition between the vegetarian (vaisnava) goddess and the meat-eating, wine-drinking, and lustful Bhairõ is played out at a number of levels that find analogues in other articles in this volume. Like Pormannan, Bhairõ moves back and forth indiscriminately in his cravings for meat and sex. Like Kattavarayan, he becomes sexually obsessed with one of the Seven Virgins in the form of a Brahman girl (who this time is also the goddess herself, and the eldest of the seven rather than the youngest). As with myths about the goddess and the Buffalo Demon (see Hiltebeitel, this volume), the goddess lures him sexually to his doom: first through her Embryo-Womb Cave in which as the Brahman girl-goddess she has gone to hide from him to gestate in a form of her own womb-sanctum, and then into another cave from

which she finally emerges in her fierce form as Candi to kill him. His killing results in his transformation into her guardian, his severed head rolling to the valley below while his body remains as a boulder to stand guard outside the cave. As Erndl indicates, Bhairava the beheader becomes Bhairava the beheaded, and moreover, as a guardian, he is further transformed into Bhairava the Child (Bal Bhairõ), disarming him of his menacing sexuality and inverting the situation in which he had coveted the child goddess. One is reminded of the seven year old Katamaraju faced with the prospect of marrying the goddess Ganga (see Narayana Rao in this volume). As elsewhere, it is also not just a matter of one guardian for Vaisno Devi but two, as Bhairõ is joinedafter fighting him (compare Draupadi's two guardians, discussed herein by Hiltebeitel)by a vaisnava-vegetarian form of the monkey god Hanuman named Langur Vir. There are also two exemplary devotees: the meat-eating Bhairõ and the vegetarian Brahman Sridhar.

With Diane Coccari's essay, we return to Varanasi. In the city which Bhairava guards and polices, overseeing the initiatory punishment in the experience of death that can transform deatheven for sinnersinto immediate liberation, we look at those who have, as it were, shared his terrain yet died without altogether claiming this ultimate benefit: the deified dead who linger in Varanasi to receive a cult. We thus return to a terrain opened up for us by Knipe, moving once again from ultimately Brahmanical forms to popular or folk forms, and from the essentially mythic to the esentially human. For as a category, the deified dead are viewed as sharing a real human past, "an untimely, heroic, sacrificial or otherwise

extraordinary" death, and a continued presence thereafter in a shrine, where as wakeful presences they may exercise their localized powers. Coccari shows both the underlying continuities within this broad category as well as the features that distinguish some of the most prominent types: yogins or ascetics with their *samadhis*,the tomb-stones that mark their initiatory deaths; female figures, including Satis or widows who join their husbands on the funeral pyre; *Brahms*,the spirits of Brahmans, who may linger precisely to avenge their own Brahmanicides; Muslim deities, particularly those connected with the remarkably fluid cult of the Panchon Pir or Five Saints; and the "heroes" (*bir*)from various low-to-middle caste groups, most notably those of the cattle-herding Ahir. As Coccari notes, the deified dead share a common ambiance. Yogins and Birs may overlap (as indeed yogins and heroes overlap in the *Mahabharata*).Coccari's subjects have their affinities with

many others in this volume. As throughout, one meets variations on the interaction between Muslim and Hindu deities, between iconic and aniconic representations, the theme of transfiguration into more benign and protective presences, and certain Birs linked with sorcery and exorcism and rituals of quieting and appeasement. And with regard to the Ahirs and the remarkable story of Bachau Bir, what is the link between transience and permanence that Shulman and Narayana Rao observe in connection with the figures of Kattavarayan and Katamaraju, and which seems to find such persistent expression among cattle-herders, with their widespread cults of hero stones and their folk epic mythologies of opposition to kings and dominant landed castes? 8

With the papers of Stanley and Sontheimer, we move from the north of India to the west and south, to the venue of the cult of Khandoba. Both authors have written extensively on Khandoba elsewhere. And it is primarily from their work that Khandoba stands now in rather clear profile, especially as he is worshipped in Maharashtra as an *avatar* of Siva, preeminent *ksetrapala*,and *kuladevata* to lineages within numerous castes, both high and low. Let us add that under the name Martand Bhairav, and with attendant dog, Khandoba is also a form of Bhairava. In this volume Stanley retains his focus on the Khandoba cult in Maharashtra, but addresses not so much Khandoba himself as his demon adversary-devotees and non-vegetarian guardians. And Sontheimer extends his research from the Khandoba of Maharashtra to the overlapping cults of the related, and in some ways identical gods Mallanna in Andhra Pradesh and Mailara in Karnataka.

Stanley's paper follows nicely from Coccari's. One moves from the "wakeful presences" of the deified dead to the "especially watchful places" (*jagrt ksetras*)where Khandoba has his primary residences. Moreover, Stanley also emphasizes the similarities between exorcism rites that localize the power of ghosts and render that power either harmful or benign and the Khandoba cult myths which split the destinies of Khandoba's two demon victims in similar fashion: one, Malla, the god's incorrigible enemy whose wickedness can only be neutralized by trickery; the other, Mani, whose capitulation transforms him into a demon devotee. Further oppositions in the myths and cultic treatment of these two demons tally with distinctions noted elsewhere in this volume. Malla is the great magician, Mani the army general. Each receives three dying boons, Mani honorably, Malla dishonorably, with the result that Khandoba must trick Malla at each point. One should not miss the analogies between Malla's three boons and the

three demands of Pormannan: each is trickedone by Khandoba-Siva, the other by Krsnainto receiving inferior things, with the last of the three in each case involving the monstrous offering of goat. And in this vein, it is in relation to these two demons that the Khandoba cult works out its shaded distinctions between vegetarian and non-vegetarian offerings. Where Khandoba is offered only vegetarian food (that is, especially at his wakeful places), goats may be offered to Mani, or to the combined demon Manimal, or to an additional servant, Hegadi Pradhan, who then passes the meat on to the demons. Thus Malla receives the goat only indirectly or not at all, despite the fact that in the myth it is he whom Khandoba tricks into receiving the goat offering in a "cannibalistic" form as the last of his three dying boons. Especially interesting also in view of other essays in this volume is Hegadi Pradhan. Where this Minister brother-in-law is the brother of Khandoba's junior wife (and wife of lower status) Banu, the Dhangar shepherd woman who is herself an incarnation of the goddess Ganga, one once again comes across the elements of a recurring complex, reminding us of Kattavarayan's ties to the herder girl Karuppalaki, the Gollas' worship of Ganga in the Katamaraju story, andas again with Banuthe mythologies of herders' cleverness. And Hegadi Pradhan's brother-in-law status may further remind us of the affinities between Visnu (whom he incarnates in oral, not written, versions of the Khandoba myth, and who figures frequently in South Indian

mythologies as brother-in-law of Siva), Krsna (Visnu's cowherd incarnation par excellence), and Potu Raju (who as the younger brother to numerous goddesses becomes the brother-in-law guardian of their husbands as wellif and when, like Draupadi, they have them).

Sontheimer then takes us to the heart of his concern for this volume by the device of returning repeatedly to the notation MMKh for Mallanna/Mailara/Khandoba. Although retaining a plural usage verbally ("MMKh transgress," "MMKh resemble," etc.), he shows that these three godsfrom Andhra, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, respectivelyhave intersecting and overlapping cults and images, to the point of being multiforms of one "folk deity of the Deccan." Sontheimer begins and ends his essay with an emphasis on folk religion as an ongoing component within Hinduism, traceable back to folk strains, principally centered on Rudra, within the Vedic tradition itself. He does not, however, seem to want to reconstruct an original autonomy for this folk component or emphasize its counter-cultural character so much as underscore its self-conscious interactive character: the ways in which it intersects with other components, other hierarchical

models, both Hindu and non-Hindu, of the Indian tradition. Folk gods like Khandoba, and their cults, thus retain Vedic traits not because of a bhakti rereading of the Vedic revelation, but because this folk strain has Vedic roots. And although the hierarchy of this folk religion is oriented around *tapas* and bhakti, there are differences, he argues, between folk bhakti and classical bhakti. It is instructive, considering how many of the same elements come under consideration (particularly in their discussions in this volume of continuities linking the Vedic horse sacrifice with popular folk cults), to compare the methods and insights of Sontheimer and Biardeau on these points. Sontheimer's paper also provides rich reflecting images on themes raised by numerous others in this volume: on the limits of applying Sanskritic models like the ksetrapala, Brahmanicide, and demon devotee to folk deities; on bandit kings, and rising kings as emerging icons (cf. Waghorne); on the Muslim components of Hindu folk cults (cf. Coccari and Hiltebeitel); on pastoral elements (cf. Narayana Rao); and on the affinities between ancestors, ghosts, clan deities, and heroes (cf. Coccari).

Having thus circled back from Maharashtra through the Deccan cult(s) of MMKh, the three closing papers return us to Tamilnadu. My own paper closes the cycle on specific figures who fall, however roughly, under the rubrics of our title theme, whereas Hudson's and Waghorne's papers extend the theme into related areas: Hudson into the violent acts of devotion of the Tamil Saivite Nayanars, and Waghorne into the royal history and mythology of the Kallar kings of the former Tamil princely state of Pudukkottai.

My paper takes as its primary issue a theme that recurs in a number of this volume's papers: the rapport between two guardians in one cult. It is argued that in at least this one case, the categories of "demon devotee" and "criminal god" can be applied oppositionally, with further distinctions again worked out between vegetarian and non-vegetarian offerings, symbolic and real sacrifices, army marshalship and magic, iconic and aniconic forms, mobile and fixed forms, peripherality and centrality. Moreover, with the cult in question being that of Draupadi, the heroine of the *Mahabharata* as South Indian goddess, one has the special opportunity to see how this bhakti folk cult works out these oppositions in parallel folk epic mythologies in both regional and classical forms. Finally, the rapport between Draupadi's two guardians is further examined on the level of their cult, iconography, and positions in Draupadi temples in relation to structures of the Vedic sacrifice as it has been transformed through the medium of bhakti Hinduism.

In extending the investigation into a discussion of saints, Hudson's

essay provides an entree into the larger question of the pertinence of our title theme to the interpretation of wider aspects of Hinduism. Sensitive to the inappropriateness of referring to saints as "criminal," Hudson uses that term sparingly, prefering the terms "violent," "fierce," and "fanatical" to describe the "cutting" acts of devotion that typify a goodly numbertwenty-four of the proverbial sixty-threeof the Tamil Saivite saints, the Nayanars. And indeed, one must be careful, as always, not to homogenize our subjects. As far as continuities go, one should appreciate that Hudson's contribution to the overall issue is both methodological and thematic. On the methodological side, over against the usual tide that presumes a great divide between the "restrained" classical bhakti of the epics and unrestrained emotive bhakti of

sectarian traditions like that of the Nayanars, he stresses a double imbrication of epic themes and prototypes from the *Mahabharata* into the Nayanar hagiography of violent devotion. And he is alert to Vedic continuities as well, particularly in connection with the performance of violent acts before the lingam, for which there is precedent in earlier South Indian evidence that actual sacrifices were made before the lingam as a seeming multiformto draw the discussion furtherof the Vedic sacrificial stake. As to thematic continuities, one cannot miss in the stories of the Nayanars' fierce expressions of their love (*anpu*)of Siva an alternate articulation of many of the themes that characterize the "criminal god" and "demon devotee": the sacrificial themes just mentioned, guardian functions, pure and impure offerings, Brahmanicide, and collectively the full range of caste identities. But the discontinuities are also marked, and easily perceived through Hudson's rich discussion of the theological ideosyncracies of the Tamil Saivite concept of anpu. Let us just note here the contrast between the Kapalikas, for whom Siva-Bhairava is a kind of ultimate and cosmic archetype after whom one models oneself by carrying a skull bowl and experientially affirming the bliss of his union with the goddess (see Lorenzen in this volume), and the Nayanar whose violent acts are stirred up in living conflict situations by Siva's own anpu for his devotees, so that they entangle the Nayanar with his fierce Lord, present either in the lingam or in others of his devotee-slaves, in astonishingly intense and intimate forms of violent love. Moreover, the sin of Brahmanicide, though still thematically present in the Nayanar stories, recedes from its ultimacy. The ultimate sin is no longer Brahmanicide but Siva-cide, the sin of killing one of Siva's slaves or wounding his lingam, sins that are atoned for not by any skull-bearing penance to Varanasi but, as in the story of Candesvara

Nayanar who kills his Brahman father, by the nullification of the sin through the anpushared with the ultimately unslayable but forever self-offering Siva himselfthat the sin itself intensifies. Despite its different theological emphasis, however, the story of Candesvara Nayanar provides an almost certain instance of a hagiographic legend constructed whole cloth out of mythic and ritual themes: themes, moreover, that are recurrent throughout this book. Candesvara is none other than a humanized-sanctified version of Siva's guardian deity, Canda, and his myth explains how as a saint he takes on not only Canda's name but that god's mythic and ritual functions: the status of "commander-in-chief and leader of all Siva's servants," and the charge of receiving the remnants of the offerings from Siva's worship at a position to the northeast of Siva's temples. 9

Waghorne's paper then takes up the dynastic history and mythology of the Kallar royal house, the Tontaimans, of Pudukkottai, relating our overall theme to the dynamics of historical interaction between this hinterland kingdom, its neighboring larger kingdoms, and ultimately the British. To reverse the order of her discussion to its sequential chronology, in the founding legends of the royal line, the first kings play out the typical inversion of their Kallar caste prerogative as robbers or plunderers who may be enlisted as guardians against other robbers like themselves: the pattern that led to the British dubbing the Kallars a "criminal caste." The initial storiesleading up to the establishment of independent Tontaiman rule in Pudukkottai in 1689show the Tontaiman heroes taming wild animals and quelling rebellions in contexts that result in their becoming the protectors, guardians, or allies of the larger and more established neighboring kings of Ramnad, Madurai, and Trichinopoly, who invest them with a rich panoply of royal insignia called Biruthus (Tamil *pirutu*).Second, the cycle of stories about Vijaya Raghunatha Raya, who ruled Pudukkottai from 1730 to 1769, concentrates on the absolution of this king's sins through his encounters with a Brahman ascetic, who instructs him to institute worship of Siva in the palace and arrange for the annual performance of Dasara, the royal festival to the goddess. It it notable that this ceremony is regarded as an expiatory rite for the king's sins, a reminder that this was also a function of the chief Vedic royal sacrifice, the Asvamedha or horse sacrifice, which Dasara, with its buffalo sacrifices, would seem to have replaced (see further Biardeau's discussion in this volume of village instances where these two rites have been fused together). One may also tie in this image of the sinful king theoretically with E. Chalier Visuvalingam's discussion

of the royal Mahabrahmana: Vijaya Raghunatha is innocent of Brahmanicide, but in certain versions of their first meeting he inadvertantly wounds the Brahman sage before the latter instructs him. Finally, 1882 marks the assumption by Raja Ramacandra Tontaiman of the title Brihadambal Das, "Servant of the goddess Brihadambal," a title in which Waghorne sees the fulfillment of a kind of emergent royal icon which, with its low caste robber foundations, royal Biruthus, sins, identities with other castes, and servant status to the goddess, bearsin its cumulative forma resemblence to the converted

demon devotee.

Finally, Sunthar Visuvalingam examines these essays from the standpoint of the dialectics of transgressive sacrality, looking particularly at the embryogonic symbolism of the royal diksita as evidence not only for Vedic-folk continuities, but as a means to interpret both Vedic and folk themes, and arguing that this dialectic has been generalized within Hinduism as a whole, beyond the encompassment of bhakti. Here as elsewhere, astute readers will find it no more difficult to recognize the different methodological strains among our authors than the common threads that unify their subjects.

Notes

1. On Bengal, see in the selected biblography the works cited by Sarkar 1986, Ostor 1980; on central India, see Babb 1975; on Karnataka, see Srinivas 1965; Prabhu 1972; Claus 1973, 1978; on Kerala, see Kurup 1973, Ayrookuzhiel 1983, Tarabout 1986.

2. See M. Arunachalam, *Ballad Poetry*: *Peeps into Tamil Literature* (Tiruchitrambalam: Gandhi Vidyalayam, 1976), 187-89.

3. See Hiltebeitel in this volume and further discussion, including that of other Telugu Poturaju-goddess myths on this theme, in Hiltebeitel, *The Cult of Draupadi*, *I*. *Mythologies*, *From Gingee to Kuruksetra* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 345-79.

4. Compare, however, Katamaraju's "relentless duty to lead" others to their deaths in battle, another reminder of the *Mahabharata* mythology of Krsna and the Draupadi cult mythology of Krsna and Pormannan.

5. Eveline Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*: *A Goddess of Tamilnadu*, *Her Myths and Cult* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), 81, 83; Hiltebeitel, *Cult of Draupadi*,41, 52, 372-73.

6. See Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1975), vol. 7, 407, 410-11.

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7. See David N. Lorenzen, *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*: *Two Lost Saivite Sects* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 56, 63.

8. On hero stones, see the articles of Sontheimer and Murty cited in the Selective Bibliography in Günther D. Sontheimer and S. Settar, eds., *Memorial Stones*. *A Study of their Origin*, *Significance*, *and Variety* (Dharwad and Heidelberg, 1982); on herders in connection with folk epics, see Velcheru Narayana Rao, "Epics and Ideologies: Six Telugu Folk Epics," in Stuart H. Blackburn and A. K. Ramanujan, eds., *Another Harmony*. *New Essays on the Folklore of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 141, 144, 151-56; Gene H. Roghair, *The Epic of Palnadu*. *A Study and Translation of Palnati Virula Katha* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 28, 30, 102, 163, 214-15; Hiltebeitel, *Cult of Draupadi*,32-35, 220-21, 226, 355, 399, 418; and Narayana Rao in this volume.

9. See the discussion in Erik Af Edholm, "Canda and the Sacrificial Remnants. A Contribution to Indian Gastrotheology," *Indologica Taurinensia* 12 (1984), 76-77. See further Hiltebeitel in this volume.

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Brahmans and Meat-Eating Gods

Madeleine Biardeau

From the beginning of my Indological studies, I have been quite convinced that Hindu society was much less divided

ideologically, that the top and the bottom were not so utterly alien to each other, than was usually contended, particularly among anthropologists. Being myself of classical philosophical training, I could not imagine how to convince others, including anthropologists, of this belief, and I was prepared to say that, after all, it was a philosophical matter that should not be debated in scholarly circles, because everyone had his own opinion beforehand. I now think, however, the Hindu gods have been with me, and even more so the Hindu goddess.

It was years ago, when I started studying the goddess both through texts and through fieldwork in South India, that my attention was drawn to a series of minor carnivorous gods who were all guardians and devotees of the goddess. Actually, although the texts taught me one side of the situation, fieldwork brought me another type of data which by and by started to make sense through my classical background. The more or less poor and local goddess temples I visited contained some lesser known deities who had the common property of being subordinate to the goddess. Quite by chance, I started in coastal Andhra and noticed in front of the so-called *gramadevata*,or village goddess temples one of these minor gods called Potu Raju. By now I have published a few small articles about him, and especially about his usual shape as a wooden stake and its similarity to the Vedic sacrificial stake, the yupa. 1 I have since been interested in following this plastic motif of the post under different versions in different parts of South India, and I am preparing a book on the whole subject.2

For the present I want to select two of these versions, but not

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mainly from the viewpoint of the post, which in our present cases can no longer be so easily compared to the yupa, but from the angle of myth and ritual, which also introduces a number of classical references. The two versions are found in Mariyamman temples, one in the lower Kaveri basin mainly among temples on the north bank of the delta area, and the other in Kongunad. It is mainly the posts and rituals that differentiate the two, but these elements are both connected with mythic differences as well. Everywhere my visits to the temples were quite brief, and I never attended the festivals personally.

I shall discuss only two examples of the first category, which have in common at first sight an impalement stake in front of the temple. Mariyamman's shrine is always considered to be in the center of the village. Usually the local landlord caste is that of the Vanniyar, or exceptionally the Kallar.

The Valattur temple (Papanasam Taluk, Thanjavur District) is a Mariyamman temple, as usual facing east. It is trying to revive its traditions. The Kallar are the dominant caste. The festival takes place in the month of Cittirai (April-May). The Kallar informants, including the headman of the village, explain that Vaisnava and Smarta Brahmans live on the northern side of the temple, as do the Acari; all the Kallar live on the southern side. One Velalar family provides Mariyamman with a priest. In front of the temple are a *balipitham* 3and an impalement stake that served originally to impale Kattavarayan, that demon king who stole a Brahman woman. But Kattavarayan's friend, Cinnan, helped him out of the difficulty. A Cettithat is, one of those rich merchants who used formerly to be attacked and robbed of their goods by the Kallarpassed by the *kalumaram* (a high hook-swinging post and not the low one now there) and asked what it was. Cinnan advised him to climb it and see for himself. So the Cetti did, and Cinnan quickly impaled him. Soon after, some eagles*kalaku*cameand plucked out his eyes. Since then the Cetti has been worshipped on the kalumaram as Kaluvutaiyan: the Master of the impalement stake.

We can bypass most of the ritual, but must note some characteristic details. Inside the temple *mandapam* are several painted wooden statues of Kattavarayan with his two wives, Kaluvutaiyan, Cinnan, and Karuppucami. There is a festival to the god Aiyanar that is celebrated at the same time as Mariyamman's in Cittirai. Some he-goats are offered both on Mariyamman's side and on Aiyanar's side, but in each case they are offered to the subordinate demon guardians, so that the distinction between the vegetarian Mariyamman and Aiyanar and the

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meat-eating demons is well marked. One or two days after the conclusion of the seventeen-day festival, there comes the day of "human sacrifice." This takes the form of *kavati* offerings, which are of three types: *alaku-kavati*,in which long needles (*alaku*)are stuck under the skin of those who stand under the vow; *pal-kavati*,in which a stick is carried on the

shoulder with a pot of milk at each end; and *ter-kavati*,in which a tiny *ter* or *rath* (a war chariot) is drawn by a rope and a hook fixed under the skin of the offerer's back. These offerings are brought to the goddess at the end of a rather long walk. Kallar are non-vegetarian people. But they show all respect to the vegetarian diet of Mariyamman and Aiyanar, who are the protectors of their village. The "tortures" for which they take vows are of a rather mild type and do not seem to upset the goddess, though the needles and hooks are removed as soon as the votary arrives at the temple.

One more thing: Kattavarayan seems to have some special link with the Kallar, because the latter spare him even though usually the impalement stake is meant for him as the one who stole a Brahman woman. The Kallar, although formerly a "criminal caste," regard themselves as Ksatriyas, because there are Kallar kings. Kattavarayan is also a Ksatriya, if we remember that he is the same as Arjuna Kartavirya, the oppressive king who stole the cow of the Brahman Jamadagni, whose wife Renuka is herself identical with Mariyamman. But this is not the only place where Kattavarayan is spared: it would be difficult to assume that he is forever sitting on the impalement stake and at the same time permanently staying with the goddess as her guardian and devotee. But the Tamil stories about Kattavarayan are very far from the epic and Puranic ones. One feature remains, though: he is still a warrior, and the cow turns into a Brahman woman in order to retain the classical pattern of distorted relations between Brahmans and Ksatriyas.

In this Valattur temple, Kattavarayan remains the first of Mariyamman's bodyguards, but Karuppu is the second. He has his own processional image made of painted wood. No element of the local myth refers to him, whereas Kattavarayan has his own followers and devotees. The presence of Karuppucami, however, as lower than Kattavarayan seems generalized throughout the area. The Mariyamman temple of Tirunanriyur (Sirkali Taluk, Thanjavur District) is no exception to this rule. Though Mariyamman is still considered to occupy the center of the village, seven villages take part in her Cittirai festival, which lasts for thirteen days. The whole area is inhabited almost exclusively by Pataiyatcis (or Vanniyars). Mariyamman has a

Pataiyatci *camiyati*,a man who is possessed by Kattavarayan. 4 In front of the temple, but on the other side of the modern road, there is a kalumaram, an impalement stake, that has one remarkable feature: its base is a kind of pyramid with five steps, which might be an unconscious symbol of the five Vedic sacrificial fires. In the inner mandapam of the temple, there are two processional images of Kattavarayan and Karuppucami in the form of painted wooden statues. Kattavarayan is on horseback and accompanied by his two wives, one on each side. He is regarded as Mariyamman's son, and during each night of the annual festival, the main Pataiyatci priest sings Kattavarayan's story in a long and popular version that takes us far away from the classical story of Arjuna Kartavirya. On the seventh night, the marriage of Kattavarayan and the Brahman girl Ariyamalai is sung: a Brahman priest is called to celebrate the marriage, because Krsna, Kattavarayan's maternal uncle, had promised him to act as his *purohita* for his wedding. The Brahman who comes is considered to be Krsna himself. Mariyamman, regarded as Krsna's sister, is called Sakti. Her link with Jamadagni and Parasurama has been completely forgotten, whereas she seems to have some antagonistic link with the local Siva. Tirunanriyur has a famous Siva temple that was formerly sung of by the Nayanmars. On the eighth night, some Pataiyatcis dress as Kali (= Sanskrit Kali), and gather around the kalumaram. Kattavarayan is to be punished with impalement by Siva for marrying a Brahman girl. A *sula*,a sharp metal pointed weapon,5 is brought near the kalumaram, and the priest, singing the punishment of Kattavarayan, impales a sour lime on it, the sour lime being a substitute for Kattavarayan. Actually, according to the myth, the sula can act as an impalement stake as long as it possesses its own vital principle*uyir*within itself. Otherwise it is dead and cannot have any effect. Sakti, Kattavarayan's mother, has advised her son to cut the kalumaram and change its place a little bit. That is why during the ritual the mobile sula is slightly removed from the axis of the temple that connects Mariyamman inside and the kalumaram outside. In this way, and in the shape of an impaled lime, Kattavarayan preserves his life forever and will remain in front of Mariyamman. Siva is angry and punishes Sakti to be reborn on earth as Mariyamman. The rebirth of Parvati as Renuka is also one of the late Puranic versions of Renuka's story (cf. *Sahyadrikhanda*, *Renukamahatmya*,Bombay 1877). Karuppu is just the goddess's other bodyguard, but he does not play any part in the local myth. Karuppu is still outside his own main area of worship and is inferior to Kattavarayan, but his status will continue to be low even when Kattavarayan disappears.

On the tenth day of the festival the ter procession takes place, although the temple seems too poor to maintain a real ter.

A small statue of Mariyamman is carried on a bullock cart, but the procession follows the same chariot route as Siva's procession. The same day, when the procession is over, the people under vows either take part in a firewalking ceremony, or have long needles stuck under their skin, or do both together. These are the only forms of violence in Mariyamman's worship, because he-goats that have been sacrificed on the first day are offered to the limit goddesses only. Nonetheless, a Brahman came to celebrate Kattavarayan's wedding. This shows a subtle understanding of Krsna's significance as Visnu's *avatara* and brother of Sakti, who can take some liberty with Sastraic rules: in this case blessing Kattavarayan's crime. His interference is rare in such a local type of goddess festival, but may be made possible through Siva's importance and the transformation of Mariyamman into Sakti. Kattavarayan's crime is always the same and opposes pure to impure castes, vegetarian to meat-eating ones. But the goddess definitely needs him, in spite of her own purity and his impurity and reckless behaviour, or rather because of this reckless behaviour and his subsequent sacrifice. Through him only will she be able to protect the place without involving herself directly in the activities of bloodshed. In this particular local context, the whole of Hinduism is present in its superior and inferior forms. This will become even clearer when Karuppu's real status is brought to the fore. This takes us to the second version of Mariyamman's worship in Kongunad.

In an area of Kongunad north of Dharapuram (Periyar District), the connected festivals of Mariyamman in the center and Kali on the outer limit of the locality are of a very rich and complex symbolism. In this same area, and particularly around Dharapuram, many goddess temples are identified with sites of the *Mahabharata*,all of them, as far as I could see, linked exclusively with scenes of the *Virataparvan*.I will describe only one such place, Civanmalai, where Mariyamman and Vira-Kaliyamman are about one hundred yards apart, in an empty space, although they retain their traditional location at the center and on the limit of the village. Mariyamman's temple opens to the east, Kali's as usual to the north. Mariyamman, two-armed, sits holding a sword and skull. Virakali has four arms with the usual weapons, but she sits with her right leg raised on the seat, the left one hanging down, and her foot resting on the head of a Raksasa. Both festivals of sixteen days each start every year in Pankuni (March-April), and with only one day's difference between them. The same *pantaram* priest acts

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in both festivals, and the same village headman.

We shall concentrate only on the main days of the festival. For Virakali, these are days thirteen through sixteen, during which the processional image of the goddess goes around the whole village. The fifteenth day, however, is the most important. Early in the morning the caste women of four villages, including Civanmalai, bring lamps made of dough*mavilakku*.At noon they cook a *ponkal* 6in the temple courtyard. These elements of the ritual are very common. But in the evening something specific to this area takes place: a mare is brought by the headman, who has hired it. It stops just in front of the goddess. The pantaram washes its feet and puts a pottu mark on its forehead. He offers a puja both to Virakali and the mare and sprinkles the latter with the puja water. There is a very tense silence while people wait for the mare to shake its head, and the music stops playing. When it does shake its head, the mare is then taken in procession by the headman, accompanied by one of the *pucaris*,who carries a tray with the ornaments of the Virakali *mulavar*,that is, the only movable parts of the main fixed image (*mulavar*)in the shrine. First they go to a tank, where a he-buffalo is waiting. This buffalo has been bought by all the participants, or else is offered by some individual. The buffalo is bathed and a pottu put on its forehead. The procession goes on: the mare with the headman, the buffalo led by the usual pantaram of the temple and the other pantaram carrying the goddess's ornaments. They go to the house of a Brahman, who has Virakali as his *istadevata*.7The Brahman performs a puja to the tray and puts some clothing and jewelry for the goddess upon it. He feeds the buffalo. Again the procession starts in the north-east direction and stops at an unmarked place where the pucari "calls all the goddesses." This rite is called *ammai alaittal*.Then the procession goes back to the temple and arrives at the same time as the *utsavamurti* (processional image). The mare is sent back to its master, having completed its part. The buffalo is brought near a ditch that has been dug out just in front of the goddess. The headman must be present when the buffalo is sprinkled with puja water, shakes its head, and is beheaded by the pantaram. Both head and body are pushed into the ditch and covered with earth. The pantaram slaughterer, being in a trance, falls unconscious. He is brought back to consciousness with some water. Then the pongal that had been cooked in the morning is offered to the goddess with coconuts and bananas, the whole being returned to the offerers later. This whole ritethat is, the buffalo sacrificeis called *tiruppu* and explained as *matu-tirupputal*,"the bringing back of the cows." This is a well-known episode of the *Virataparvan* of

the *Mahabharata*,in which Arjuna brings home the cattle of Virata which had been stolen by the Kauravas.

All this requires some decoding, beginning with the ritual connected with the mare and the "calling of the goddesses." The presence of a female animal is very rare in such rituals, and a mare was quite unexpected. At the start, it has its feet washed. Then it is worshipped on a par with Virakali and sprinkled with water. Then there is complete silence when the animal is expected to shake its head. When it does so, this is considered a good omen, although usually this is the signal for the slaughter of the sacrificial animal. So on one side she is treated like the goddess and identified with her during the puja. But the foot wash and the sprinkling of the head can be seen as separate elements of a traditional horse sacrifice. Before it starts on its one year's wandering, the Vedic sacrificial horse has its feet washed. But the sprinkling of the head after the puja and the complete silence that accompanies it should be understood as a quite common sacrifical rite that takes place just before the beheading of the animal. So here the beginning of the horse sacrifice and the end, that is the sacrifice of the horse itself, are brought together, though they used to happen a year apart. But the sacrifice is not performed. It looks as if, as a mare, the goddess has been treated as a symbolic victim of a sacrifice that will actually take place later.

This reference to the horse sacrifice, unexpected as it is, allows an interpretation of the mysterious "calling of the goddesses"ammai being the Tamil transcription of *amba*,an early Sanskrit term of address for a woman, meaning "mother." We have to notice that both the mare, still in front of the temple, and the he-buffalo when it has been bathed at the tank, heve received a pottu on their foreheads that is a sign of marriage. We remember that in the Asvamedha, just after the death of the sacrifical horse, a symbolic copulation must take place between the horse and the main queenthe *mahisi*.At that time a voice calls amba three times under slightly different forms: amba, *ambika*, *ambalika* or *ambali*.Here the mare stands for the *mahisi*,but in the meantime the sacrificial horse has been turned into a *mahisa*,a buffalo.

Along the same lines, we can interpret the visit to the Brahman as a remote reference to the horse sacrifice. When the horse starts on its one year's wandering, instructions are given to the young warriors who accompany it. If a Brahman says he does not know the Asvamedha, his house should be plundered. He is not worthy of his Brahmanhood. There may have been very early Brahmans who shunned that type of sacrifice, which was so much like a war during

its most important phases. Here, on the contrary, the Brahman invites the goddess as being his istadevata, gives her presents and feeds the buffalo. In ancient terms, the Brahman accepts the horse's master as his king. Lastly, one more feature must be noticed: the pantaram's fit of unconsciousness after the beheading of the buffalo. The pantaram is possessed by the goddess, and his fit is a reminder of the sufferings an Asvamedha brings to the earth or the kingdom that the goddess symbolizes. And even more clearly, the pantaram's fit is a reproduction of Renuka's temporary loss of consciousness when she is beheaded. Renuka is a victim, or better, she is *the* victim. That is the reason why, at the beginning of this ritual, the mare is to act as the victim: when she shakes her head, she is supposed to agree with the expected suffering of sacrifice. That is further why she takes part in the procession, first alone, and then accompanied by the buffalo. The long procession is to be understood as the one year's roaming of the sacrificial horse. 8

During this same time, Mariyamman's festival is going on with the same structure as Virakali's, but one day later. Right from the beginning and for twelve days, a regular worship goes on in the temple, but every night Madari leather workers come to beat their drums and other men dance in front of the shrine. On the twelfth day (on which the *utsavamurti* of Virakali is brought down from the Subrahmanya temple in order to start the processions on the thirteenth day), Kavuntars go and cut a branch of *paccamaram*,that is, of a tree with milky sap. The branch must end in the shape of a three-pronged fork. They immerse this *kampam* (post) in the temple tank till night. In the evening the utsavamurti of Mariyamman is brought down from the Subrahmanya temple. The ritual now underway will continue through part of the night. The pantaram prepares a clay potkumbhaon a copper tray. He goes to the tank, takes his bath, and fills the kumbha with water. At the same time, the village headman takes the wooden kampam out of the water. The three objects are put on the bank of the tank and a *gurukkal* of the Siva temple blesses them and gives the pucari a *yajñopavita*,or sacred thread. The same pucari also puts a *cattai* on his shoulder, that is, a kind of whip made of rope and having one end thicker than the other. A new pucari comes and carries the kampam, whereas the first one carries the kumbha full of water and decorated with mango leaves and a coconut on the top. All the way from the tank to the temple, men and

women come and pour water on the two men's feet. The kumbha is put down close to the balipitham whereas the kampam is held upright by its side. After a puja to Mariyamman, the village headman digs out a hole right in

the axis between Mariyamman's *mulavar* and Tunaicami, a permanent stone post outside the temple. He kills a ram, puts its head in the hole for a while, and takes it out. This ram will be given to the Madaris. Then the wooden forked stake is lodged into this hole. The main pucari puts the kumbha in the fork and ties it fast with palmyra leaf fibres. Mariyamman is given a diparadhana, "an offering of light." During the next three days (thirteenth through sixteenth), the kumbha will remain tied on the stake and Mariyamman will receive a daily puja.

On the fifteenth day women bring *mavilakku* (flour lamps) on a tray with coconut, bananas, and camphor. They come from outside in a procession and put their lighted mavilakku lamps in a double row from the goddess to the post and give some dough and the rest of the offerings to the pucari. The village headman brings a ram in front of the balipitham as a clear offering to the goddess. The pucari sprinkles water on the animal and burns some camphor in front of it. Then everybody hushes up till the animal shakes its head. As soon as it does, it is beheaded by the village headman. As offered to the goddess it will ultimately be given to the pucari. No part of the victim is directly presented to the goddess nor given in a cooked meal. At noon, the women return to the temple and prepare pongal. A small quantity is offered to the goddess through the pucari, who will eat it. The rest they take back home.

In the afternoon, men and women who are under a vow take a bath in the *teppakkulam* (the Siva temple tank for the floating of rafts with icons on them during festival time). From there they form a procession towards the temple while each dances and carries a fire-pot (*pucatti*)with fire in it. The pucatti used here is smaller than the one used only by the pucaris in other places. It is carried with both hands outstretched. In front of these fire-bearers other men, in Mariyamman's garb, take the lead and dance without any pot. As soon as they enter the temple, the fire-pots are put down in front of the goddess. They will be left there and removed much later by the priest. Soon after this the utsavamurti of the goddess goes in procession around the village. Then the local cesspool cleaner goes around to inform the village people that they have to bring water to the kampam. They very soon turn up with the pots of water. The village headman brings a third ram, and after the usual ritual of sprinkling, silence, and the shaking of the animal's head, he slaughters it. Then the pucari breaks the ties of the kumbha atop the post and brings it to the mulavar's feet, showing great respect. With the whip on his shoulder and one of the goddess's garlands around his neck, he goes into a trance and uproots the kampam. During all this,

the people pour out their pots of water on the kampam and the pucari. The latter puts the ram's head in the hole and crushes it with the kampam. He fills up the hole with mud. The cesspool cleaner will get the body of the ram. Then the pucari, still in a trance and with the help of his assistants, the village headman, and the Madaris, carries the kampam once around the temple, and then to the teppakkulam. There the kampam is immersed for good in the water.

In order to interpret this ritual, it must be connected with the parallel one to Virakali. One may examine Brenda Beck's study of a similar Mariyamman festival of Kannapuram, and find it more interesting for its alternaton of a fire-pot and a water kumbha on the wooden post. 9 I also collected one such version, but associated with a Kali festival that did not include either a mare or a buffalo. But the final interpretation we give here to the whole will not be essentially different from the one I would have given of the other version collected in Cennimalai, just a few miles away from Civanmalai. The benefit I found in the version selected for this paper was the complete dissociation of water and fire: water is brought to the kampam and the priests who take care of it, but at that time there is no burning fire. So this seemingly clear opposition disappears.

The fifteenth day on which the stake is removed and water profusely poured out is the day following the buffalo's sacrifice (fifteenth day, but one day earlier, at the Virakali temple). Because we have discovered some reminiscences of the horse sacrifice, we had better start with this here as well. The forked stake also seems to be a heritage of the horse sacrifice. It is found east of the twenty-one sacrificial posts, just behind the central one and in the axis of the fire altar, and it is used quite at the end of the Asvamedha, even after the avabhrtha, the closing bath. It is called *visala yupa* (cf.

Apastamba Srauta Sutra 10.22.23.1; *Baudhayana Srauta Sutra* 15.37), and it receives the three last victims: a he-goat to Agni, a he-goat to Indra and Agni, and a he-goat to the Asvins, perhaps in the absence of the *yajamana*.This yupa was made of wood with milky sap. Each victim is tied to one each of its three terminal prongs. The one we have here in front of the Mariyamman temple is not a mere yupa like the Vedic one. Rather it is identified with the victim, like the Pota Raju in Andhra and Kattavarayan in the Thanjavur area. Water is connected with its arrival procession to the temple as well as with its uprooting and return procession to the teppakkulam. On its way to the temple on the twelfth evening it is accompanied by the kumbha which will remain tightly fastened to it for three days. The kumbha clearly stands for the goddess

and is carried by her priest. The other pantaram stands aside, because he has not been given any yajñopavita nor any protective thread. One more weapon of the main pucari each time he has to carry the post is the whip, which we find in many situations where it symbolizes the rope to tie the sacrificial animal to the Vedic yupa. In other versions of this ritual, like Beck's Kannapuram Mariyamman festival, a marriage is suggested between the post and the kumbha. Here there is no other sign of marriage than the placing and tying of the kumbha on the forked post. The goddess would thus seem compelled to stay on top of it for three days, the suggestion being that this marriage is forced upon the unwilling goddess, and the yajñopavita given to the pantaram to make him a Brahman priest temporarily to perform that mock marriage. It tallies quite closely with the widespread story of Karnataka, in which the goddess is a Brahman girl whose parents marry her by mistake to a low caste buffalo meat-eating boy. As a result she will be reborn as a goddess and the buffalo will be her attendant. In Beck's study and in a neighboring Mariyamman temple, a small stone stands permanently in that hole where the post is to be planted for three days, and is dug out every year and put aside. In each place this is a Karuppu. Karuppu's liking for water also helps identify him with the Buffalo Demon Mahisasura. He has not given up his function as yupa, because all three rams have been offered at the foot of this post, including the middle one clearly offered to the goddess.

One more detail should also be noticed. At the time of planting the wooden post, the village headman kills a ram and puts its head for a while in the hole where the post will be planted. Three days later, the pucari, in a trance, removes the post and puts the head of the third ram killed by the village headman into the hole. He crushes this head at the bottom of the hole before filling the hole with mud. The act of crushing in itself might have a meaning. The horse sacrifice is included in three days of Soma sacrifice, for which a plant is crushed and its juice extracted, and in which animals are also killed. In the *Mahabharata* the clearest transformation of this rite on the battlefield is the death of Abhimanyu, whose head is crushed with a mace by Duhsasana's son. Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna and nephew of Krsna, was the heir to the throne of the Soma dynasty and is the incarnation of Soma the Moon, or of Somavarcas, Moonlight. This horrible crushing seems to point to Abhimanyu as the Soma victim. The same thing might have happened to Duryodhana, after the breaking of his thighs, had Yudhisthira not stopped Bhima when the latter was about to crush Duryodhana's head with his foot. Duryodhana also considered himself the

heir of the Somavamsa. So in this crushing of the ram's head, there may be a forgotten trace of the Soma ritual in which the horse sacrifice was inserted.

Finally, we must notice one more thing about Mariyamman. She permanently wears a *tali* and so is considered as a married woman. But very few people are willing to give more information about her husband. The gurukkal of the neighboring Siva temple was the only one to assert that Mariyamman was the same as Renuka, wife of the *muni* Jamadagni. During the three days she is sitting on the post she is considered as the wife of Mahisasura. The rest of the year she is more or less consciously the wedded wife of the Brahman Jamadagni rather than his widow. But the ritual helps us to understand why. In the Thanjavur district, the prototype for her suitor Kattavarayan is Arjuna Kartavirya, the oppressive king of the classical myth, a king of certain marshy regions with Mahismati (Rich in buffaloes) as his capital. But Kattavarayan was punished by impalement. Here, according to the local myth of Mariyamman, she was the victim of Mahisasura or Karuppu. But nobody compels people to consider her a widow for the rest of the year. She may still be the wife of a living husband. Right from the *Mahabharata* onwards, she has been the wife of Jamadagni, this unusually wrathful Brahman husband. One day he had her beheaded for a minor fault. Her son Parasurama did the beheading, but

got his mother soon revived by his father. This is like an announcement of Arjuna Kartavirya's harassment and of the great slaughter of Ksatriyas by Parasurama. The princess-goddess is the symbol of a kingdom and of the whole earth provided she has married the right king, that is, a good Ksatriya respectful of Brahmans. The fire-pots, it seems to me, are clear symbols of the Brahman husband, that "all-devouring fire" (*Jamadagni*)impersonated by several epic figures, most notably the Brahman of the Khandava forest, a form taken by Agni himself as the fire that seeks to burn everything on earth, as in one of Kartavirya's stories. That is what the ritual has to say. Mariyamman-Renuka is harrassed by two suitors, her legitimate but Brahman husband, and either Kartavirya, demonic king of a marshy and unhealthy place, or Mahisasura, who could be given the same definition. In both situations she is anything but the happy queen of a happy kingdom. That is why she has to be alone as a warrior goddess in her temple, but with the help of subordinate warriors.

We thus arrive at two conclusions, or two answers to two different questions. One concerns the demons turned into devotees. The demons are not a portion of the world's inhabitants that must be

exterminated to the last. The world cannot live without them even if they stand on the impure side of society. They are needed, just as, for instance, the cesspool cleaner is needed. But they must behave themselves, and respect the world-dharma and their own dharma. In the case of Renuka, the situation is even more complex because as a princess she married a Brahman hermit who could not allow her to act as a princess. A Brahman king is a catastrophe, although if he acts as a Brahman, he is necessary to the world. As a princess, Renuka could also not marry a low caste man, for this again would violate the dharma. But a princess, because of what she symbolizes in the world, is always a temptation to all men from the top to the bottom of society, although only a dharmic king is allowed to marry her. It is not by chance that the deep link between lower and higher castes, pure and impure, is evinced by the goddess's worship. She obviously does not like meat, though princes are meat-eaters; in this way pure people may accept her, but because of her princely status, she needs help from impure, meat-eating castes, who are impersonated by the demons she has fought victoriously. In this way also, the impure side of society admits its subordination to the pure side.

As to our second point, it is not so surprising to unearth some scraps, almost beyond recognition, of the Vedic horse sacrifice, particularly in an area where the *Mahabharata* seems to be so much alive even nowadays. The *Mahabharata*,which concerns itself so deeply with the fight for dharma and provides the first known versions of the story of Renuka, Jamadagni, and Rama Jamadagnya, has also made great use of the horse sacrifice motif. Rama Jamadagnya himself performed an Asvamedha after killing all the Ksatriyas, but his Brahmanhood did not allow him to rule over the earth. He gave the whole earth to other Brahmans who were not able to rule either. Then too, the epic war itself makes use of distorted episodes of the horse sacrifice in order to bring about a complete destruction of the Ksatriyas. The princess Draupadi, no warrior herself because she has husbands to fight, is given as the cause of this destruction. At the end, the victorious Pandavas, unable to complete this horse sacrifice on the level of the war, are left with no other choice than to perform another Asvamedha, this time supposedly a ritual one although it looks rather far from the pattern of the sutras. When a horse sacrifice has been interrupted by the death of the horse, a new horse should be selected at once and another Asvamedha started.

It seems that it is very difficult to cut Hinduism into two irreconcilable parts. On the contrary, a local goddess cult says one must look to the whole.

Notes

1. See especially Madeleine Biardeau, "L'arbre *sami* et le buffle sacrificiel," in Biardeau, ed., *Autour de la déesse hindoue*, *Purusartha* 5 (1981), 215-243.

2. Madeleine Biardeau, *Histoire de poteaux*: *variations védiques autour de la Déesse* (Paris: Bulletin de L'École Française d'Extrême Orient, forthcoming).

3. The conventional "offering pedestal," or "altar," that is usually set outside the entrance to a temple.

4. The camiyati is the man who "dances the god (or the goddess)." He is not often of the same caste as the priest, who anyway ranks higher than he. As a rule he is associated with the animal sacrifice of a festival.

5. The sula is usually Siva's weapon, mostly when it is three-pronged (trisula). The use here of this mobile sula as an impalement stake, nearby the usual kalumaram, may not be totally explained by Siva's presence: it has a classical model in the *Mahabharata* (Citrasala Press Edition 16.1.30; Poona Critical Edition 15.2.19). There Krsna threatens his people with this same punishment on the sula if they disobey his orders. The epic as well knows of Siva as Sulin, the "holder of the sula weapon." Nowadays, the kalumaram itself it often called sula.

6. Rice cooked in milk in an open mud pot over an open fire until it boils over, an auspicious sign of plentifulness.

7. This means that the Brahman is a devotee of Virakali by personal choice.

8. This type of cult is found in a small area which includes Kannapuram, whose Mariyamman festival has been studied by Brenda Beck (see below, n. 9). It was at Perundurai (Periyar District, Erode Taluk) in the Cellanti Amman temple, on January 29, 1987, the day of Tai *amavasya*,that I by chance attended an oracular ritual of an unusual type. It would not be easily understood outside this area. A Velalar Kavuntar, a well-known cattle merchant of the place, had brought a small mare inside the temple and, after a *pradaksina*,placed her quite close to the shrine door and facing it. The animal was pure white all over. Her owner held her with a rope adorned with some flowers. The pantaram priest came out and put a garland on the mare's neck. After a small puja, the merchant asked a question for which an answer was expected from the goddess through the mare. The priest poured out some water on the four hoofs of the animal, then on its back at two or three spots. The mare shook her head without too much energy. But that was not what the interested witnesses expected from her. After shaking off the water drops and after a few minutes of tense silence, the mare was supposed to quiver all over her body, obviously because of the remaining coolness of the water. But the movement did not seem to be initiated by the animal. It was to appear all of a sudden, and *that* was to be the answer to the merchant's anxious question (in fact this confusion between shaking and quivering often shows in the descriptions of animal sacrifices: I have attended ram and goat sacrifices where it was the quivering

that was expected, and not so easy to get as the shaking). That day it happened that the goddess-mare was not very cooperative and there was even some bargaining between her and the devotee: if I cannot achieve this within one year, shall we make it two years? I personally saw the mare quiver without any doubt, but it was not considered sufficient. Then the owner, obviously cross with the goddess, decided to repeat the whole process: puja, water pouring and silent expectation of the answer (plus the unavoidable *daksina*,no doubt). Once more the result was not considered satisfactory, but the merchant stopped after three trials, anxious and tense as he was. Notwithstanding the ill will of the goddess on that auspicious day, a friend of the owner was eager to benefit from the same oracle and began with prostrating himself in front of the goddess's *murti* (icon) in order to establish a link. The mare was standing by his side. But the owner kept the rope in his hands, as if to assert his privileged relationship with the goddess-mare through the pucari. Every Friday the mare may hold the same role in the temple.

In this example, the mare is said to be possessed by the goddess. She is her medium, and that capacity of hers is active in the context of an elementary ritual that reproduces a sacrificial process having its source in the Asvamedha. The Kali festival has greatly helped in bringing this link to light.

9. See Brenda E. F. Beck, "The Goddess and the Demon: A Local South Indian Festival in its Wider Context," in Madeleine Biardeau, ed., *Autour de la déesse hindoue*, *Purusartha* 5(1981), 83-136.

2
Outcaste, Guardian, and Trickster: Notes on the Myth of Kattavarayan

David Dean Shulman

Ho incontrato il divino
in forme e modi
che ho sottratto al demonico
senza sentirme ladro.
Eugenio Montale

In the rogues' gallery of popular divine or semi-divine heroes who figure so prominently in the village cults of southern India, the outrageous, protean figure of Kattavarayan occupies a place of enviable eminence. His cult, originally centered, it would seem, in Tiruccirappalli District, extends through Tañcavur and South Arcot (although he is also known further south). His myth is recorded in what is perhaps the longest and most lurid of all such accounts of popular divinities, the *Kattavaraya Cuvami Katai*, 1 as well as in other popular sources such as the the *Kattavarayan Cantai ennum Kattamuttu Natakam*.2Underlying these printed sources there seems to be (or to have been) an original oral epic, or perhaps a series of epic-like ballads, similar to those recently recorded and discussed by Brenda Beck and Gene Roghair.3 At times one senses the presence of this primary, oral text behind the shared phrasing, formulae, and themes in the two works just mentioned, which diverge sharply in their presentations of the plot and its development. Moreover, the printed text of the *Kattavaraya Cuvami Katai* is often elliptical and obscureperhaps as the result of the process

of transferring an oral original to a written medium. 4 Clearly, we must look for oral versions of the Kattavarayan story, and any interpretations offered solely on the basis of the inadequate printed materials can only be tentative. We eagerly await the results of Eveline Masilamani-Meyer's current research on Kattavarayan as well as her complete translation of the text of the *katai*.

The following remarks are based in the main on the *Kattavaraya Cuvami Katai*,although I shall cite material from the *Natakam* as well. Even in its present, problematic state, the *Katai* is an extraordinarily rich text susceptible to analysis on many levels and from many points of view. Each of the major divisions of the text merits a detailed study, and the work as a whole needs to be seen in relation to similar ballads of this genre such as the *Maturaiviracuvami Katai* and the *Cutalaimatacuvami Katai* and *vilpattus*.5There are important historical issues raised by the text and relating to the development of the Kattavarayan cult: for example, the persistent identification of the hero with Murukan. Certain of these issues will be touched upon here, but I shall concentrate more on the overall organization of the Kattavarayan myth and its semantics within the context of Tamil village religion. How are we to understand the role of this rather unpalatable deity whose cruel, violent pranks comprise the main substance of his myth?6 Let us begin by briefly reviewing the complicated circumstances of Kattavarayan's birth (or rather births) as described in the frame-story with which the text opens.

A brief note, first, on the organization and external features of the text. After the invocations (to Vinayaka and Sarasvati), the conventional apology for faulty learning and mistakes in Tamil (*avaiyatakkam*),and the introductory frame-narration (pp. 5-41), the text is divided into 13 cantos (*vanam*).Each vanam begins with at least one invocation, in which we often find significant epithets of the ballad's hero inserted into an appeal to Vinayaka (to help the poet sing his story). The text defines itself as a *katai*,but its affinities lie with the metrical *malai* compositions, most of which seem to date, at least in their present form, to the 18th and 19th centuries in Tamil Nadu.7 The language of the text is heavily formulaic and tends toward the colloquial; late Urdu loan-words, misspellings, and various dialect features abound.

A. The Frame: Raksa, Rebirth, and a Father's Curse

The story opens with a test: Parvati doubted Siva's claim that he

gave sustenance (*patiyalakka*)each day to all living beings. She locked an ant in a casket; and when she opened the box the following day, she found the ant grasping tiny grains of paddy with its mouth. Now she was afraid and rushed to

Siva to ask for a means of atoning for her doubt. He sent her to create a luxurious flower garden on the bank of the Ganges near Kasi. But who was there to guard the garden? Parvati rejected Siva's first suggestions: "Ganapati will not do it, and Velan (Murukan) has become a whoremonger (*kuttikkallan*)."So Siva created a child and sent him to guard his mother's garden. 8

One day the Seven Maidens (*kannimar*)came from Kailasa to bathe in the Ganges. They entered the garden and picked its flowers; then, leaving their clothes on the river bank, they went to bathe. The boy-guardian, incensed at the theft of his garden's flowers, hid the dress of the youngest girl. When the loss was discovered, the six other *kannimar* hastened back to Kailasa to complain to Siva, who came down at once, riding his bull together with Parvati. They found the boy standing in a *carakkonrai* tree. Asked to explain his theft of the girl's dress, he boldly declared, "I took the girl's flower-garment (*puvatai*)because of *their* theft of the flowers!" But Siva cursed him and called him an Untouchable. Now Parvati intervened and, looking at him with love, gave him a boonhe would not die in the burning-ground (*vekacutalaiyile caka varam*,p.10). Siva was now even angrier, and he cursed Parvati to lose her place in the left half of his body; she would become a demoness (*pey*, *iruci*, *picacu*, *alakai*,all mentioned here). Terrified, Parvati asked when the curse would end; the god promised that it would end, and that she would be reunited with him, when the child was impaled on a stake (*kalu*).With this, Siva departed for Kailasa.

Mother and son were now left to confront one another. "Because of you I have been cursed," said Parvati; "and when will it end?when you have been born four times and come seeking me."9 She then bestowed on him the gift of knowing his former births and a host of Yama's demon-servants (*putakanam*).The child went north, to the shrine of Ottapillaiyar, to be born (pp. 6-9).10

Before we follow him in his first births, let us note the outstanding themes of this introduction (the first half of the frame-story). It is surely striking that this myth of the guardian-gatekeeper of the goddessas we find Kattavarayan in Tañcavur shrines of Mariyammanopens with a double example of the theme of guarding or protecting (*raksa*).The initial, activating impulse in the story is Parvati's unsettling doubt about Siva's ability to provide a universal protection and sustenance; the entire epic tale of earthly births, violation, and grisly sacrifice

unfolds from this first moment of skepticism. The second stage, still firmly located in the divine sphere (the goddess's garden on the way to Kasi), again calls up the theme of guarding: we meet our hero for the first time, born precisely to fill this function, because neither of his brothers is felt to be capable of doing so. (Incidentally, this is one of the few points in the text where a distinction is drawn between Kattavarayan and Murukan; elsewhere they are simply identified). As we shall see, the text is largely concerned with defining and discussing this very theme, i.e., with the nature and function of the guardian-gatekeeper, or of the boundary-zone that he constitutes around the central goddess. As the *Natakam* explicitly states (16), one finds here an explantion for the hero's name: although Madeleine Biardeau has astutely noted a link between Kattavarayan and the epic-puranic figure of Kartavirya-Arjuna (and this link does exist openly in the fifth canto of our text, as we shall see), there seems no reason to doubt the tradition's own etymology of the hero's titlefrom *ka*,"to preserve, shelter, watch, guard, ward off, rescue, wait for." 11 Kattavarayan would then be the "guardian-king." Indeed, many other epithets applied to him in the text seem to be clearly built around participial forms of the same form (thus Kattamunicami, p. 50; Vanankattacami, p. 49; Kattavanar, *passim*;cf. Kattan as a local deity name in Tamil Nadu).

But this guardian's fate is, from the beginning, problematic and laden with injustice. Following his duty and, we may add, the mythic precedent associated with Krsna, he attempts a reprisal against the girl who has stolen flowers from the garden. The result is his father's unyielding and, it would seem, exaggerated curse. The always tenuous balance in Siva's nuclear family is, as often, demolished, and events quickly escalate to the point of a seemingly incurable asymmetry and disharmony: although the conditions for a future restoration are, as usual, stated almost at once, the gravity of the situation is apparent in the violence prescribed for its redress. Parvati, seeking to mitigate the effects of Siva's intervention, is exiled from the god's androgynous embrace; only the sacrifice of her son can heal the rift. The god disappears, having shattered not only his own wholeness but also, it would seem, that of the world: a dynamic imbalance and lack of symmetry now propel the leading figures through their transformationsthe goddess turns to a violent asceticism, the son to an endless series of pranks, attacks, and other excesses. The story proper can begin.

It is very striking that the disturbance in the divine realm, indeed, in the normal composition of the deity himself, results

from an act

perceived in human terms as obviously unjust, that is, Siva's unwarranted punishment of the guardian for acting out his natural role. The *Natakam* chooses to emphasize precisely this perspective on the origin of Kattavarayan's checkered career; as the hero heads north toward his new birthplace, immediately after Siva's curse and his dialogue with his mother, he sings a song:

> Because I guarded the garden,
> this curse came to me.
> Now I must put on a grand show
> in this earthly world.
> I will display my magic tricks
> and ruin the Brahman's family. . . .
> My magic will flourish,
> my names will be known
> through all the eight points of the compass.
> I will ruin round-eyed women
> with my power.
> If anyone challenges me
> I will play my tricks
> and I shall serve women
> with love. 12

Kattavarayan's magical pranks are clearly directed toward an anti-nomian goal, the destruction of the Brahman's family and of the "roundeyed" women he desires; both elements, the hero's anti-Brahmanism and his obsession with ravishing beautiful women, are persistent features of Kattavarayan's myth. At the same time, there is a note of servicenot, perhaps, entirely ironic. And the whole identity now brazenly assumed by the child god and hero is explained in terms of the curse that sought him out and that seemingly inspires his angry, exhibitionistic drives. If Kattavarayan is, as we shall see, a kind of South Indian Trickster, the narrator still finds it necessary to reveal the logic that underlines this role. What is more, this logic seems very close to the basic theme of a tragic injusticevery often a premature deaththat pervades many Tamil village myths of apotheosis and thus explains the origin of local deities.13

The double-edged role of the guardian; a dynamic imbalance and

destabilization in the relations between Siva, his wife, and their son; and the notion of an original injustice leading to dramatic and, perhaps, tragic effectswe can follow these threads through the length of the Kattavarayan story. But let us return, for the moment, to the frame story, which now shifts to the geographical heartland of Kattavarayan's myth, the villages of Putturakam or Putturankam 14 and Omantur in Trichy District.

Kattavarayan took the form of a lime floating on the water of the river beside Ottapillaiyar's shrine in Putturakam. A Brahman girl who came to draw water ate the fruit and became ten months pregnant; as she was about to throw herself into the water, the child fell from her womb. She abandoned him in sorrow, and a Paraiya woman found him and took him home; but when her hut caught on fire from the baby's crying, the child had to be taken back to the Pillaiyar shrine and left there. This was Kattavarayan's first earthly birth. He was next born from the womb of a deer that came to graze beside Kali's shrine; the low-caste Valaiyan Civapputaiyan, servant to King Ariyappurajan, adopted the baby and brought him up to the age of five. At that point Kattavarayan, already aware of his true identity, announced to his distressed and loving father that he was going to seek his mother. Carrying an ox-goad (*tarrukkol*),he wandered in the direction of Omantur, where the goddess Kamaksi was standing in penance under an enormous banyan tree on the bank of the Kampa River.15 Tormented by hunger, he struck down a bird from the tree, which cried out to Kamaksi as it fell; the goddess now opened her third eye, in her forehead, and reduced her new-found son to ash. He became, first, a branch growing

out of the ash, and then an infant in her arms.16

Kamaksi, wondering how she could bring up this child, fashioned a swing for him from the branches of the banyan. But the Seven Maidens from Kolli Mountain (*kollimalaikanniyarkal*)came there and took the child from his all-too-willing mother. They instructed him in magic (*intirajalam*, *mantirajalam*),taught him how to go from one body to another and similar skills. Once again, at the age of five Kattavarayan insisted on returning to his "true" mother. He worshiped her with flowersthis formulaic scene will now recur at each of their subsequent meetingsand she blessed him, kissed him, warned him of her eye's terrible power, and prophesied: "You will ravage the virgins of this realm (*mantalattu kannikal*)in this Kali Age" (*Katai*,p. 24).

Kamaksi's prophecy is not, of course, an idle speculation; it may be said to define our hero's major interest. Meanwhile, the specific focus of his future activity has already come into being: Ariyappurajan,

hearing of the child "born" to his servant Civapputaiyan, sent his Brahman temple-priest (*kurukkal*)to perform acts of worship and tapas in order to attain a child. The priest, Appapattan, worshiped Siva, Visnu (Sriranganayaka), and Brahma, and these gods gave him a lime, impregnated with the life of the youngest of the Seven Maidens, to feed to his wife, Annattulaciyammal. She gave birth to a beautiful daughter, Ariyamalai. The astrologers foretold that she would be captured by the lord (*tevan*)when she reached the age of sixteen, so Ariyappurajan built twenty-one fortresses around her, to be guarded by thousands of watchmen under the command of Civapputaiyan. 17 The Brahman girl herself, enclosed within the rich pleasure gardens inside the walls, was renowned for her beauty and, in particular, for her remarkable hair (*kuntal*),which was divided into no less than sixty-three plaits, each like golden thread; a thousand servants were required simply to lift up this mass of hair.18

The major dramatis personae have now put in their first appearances, with one exceptionTottiyattuccinnan, Kattavarayan's bosom companion and alter ego. Cinnan is a Tottiyan magician from Kerala, always the land of black magic in Tamil folklore; conquered in the course of a magic contest by Kattavarayan, with the help of the shepherd-girl Karuppalaki who later becomes one of Kattavarayan's brides,19 Cinnan accompanies Kattavarayan on most of his escapades. He is there when our hero falls in love, inevitably, with Ariyamalai: the two friends find her bathing in rivers of turmeric; Kattavarayan takes the form of a fish in order to see her and is then trapped in the endless strands of her hair. Cinnan, in the form of a Garuda, disentangles him and saves him (pp. 33-36). But the hero's emotional entanglement with the Brahman girl is already complete and now forms the major theme of the entire poem. The initial image of Kattavarayan as a fish trapped in Ariyamalai's hair suggests the subsequent unfolding of the plot: the story revolves around the forbidden connection between the high-caste Ariyamalai and the Untouchable hero (in this respect Kattavarayan is identified with his foster-father, Civapputaiyan, the Valaiyan-Talaiyari; and the unclean associations of the fishermanone of the Valaiyan occupationsare surely germane to the image selected here). Note, too, that the girl's very name resonates with the purity of the Arya Brahmans and their culture; born to a kurukkalnot, incidentally, on a par with the Smartas20she is also described as the daughter of a thousand *vaidika* Brahmans. Moreover, she is in effect adopted by the king, who has an equally high-sounding title, Ariyappurajan.21 Kattavarayan will persistently challenge the Brahmans

and their royal protector, and humiliate them, in his relentless pursuit of Ariyamalai.

B. Sexual Politics and the Antinomian Hero

His problems begin, however, closer to home. Throughout the text, Kattavarayan has to argue and plead with his mother, Kamaksi, who seeks to divert his attention from Ariyamalai and thus save him from the sacrificial death that she sees as the inevitable outcome of his infatuation with her. It is important to remember that Kamaksi has, in effect, a vested interest in her son's eventual impalement, for the conditions of *her* curse make that event the prerequisite for her return to her husband Siva. Nevertheless, she continually warns Kattavarayan *not* to pursue the Brahman girl because of the terrible danger involved. There is an interesting ambivalence here which may also be reflected in the internal

relationships of this triad, which seem often to incorporate a dynamic of simultaneous repulsion and attraction. The prototypical conversation on this subject between the reluctant mother and her ardent son occurs at the very end of the frame-story, after Kattavarayan has seen Ariyamalai for the first time and declared his passion for her to his mother. He asks Kamaksi's permission to capture the girl; but the goddess replies, "She is the daughter of a Brahman (*ayan makal*),from the highest *jati*;you are the son of a Saiva mendicant (*anti*). 22Brahmanicide will overcome you, evil (*papam*)and disgrace will be yours, evil *karma* will come to you. Don't take this *pattini*more a pattini than your motherfor your wife." But Kattavarayan has already stated his preference: "Only dead logs (*kattai*alsofuneral logs, or a stake!) are with you; thought and life (*karuttellam . . . jivan ellam*)are with Malai." Kamaksi now launches into a detailed description of the forts and gardens that surround Ariyamalai; he has no hope of penetrating this vast armed camp. Then, to make things entirely explicit: "With this girl an impaling-stake (kalumaram) was born. The stake is growing by itself, untouched by the carpenter's chisel. . . . Why be burnt dry on a stake? Why should you writhe and die on the fisherman's hook (*tuntil*)?23Must I be abused by everyone who sees you impaled, who will identify you as 'Kamaksi's son'? Forget the very name of Malai, my son." But Kattavarayan is beyond persuading: "Let the impaling-stake come, let the fish-hook comeit is enough if the girl (*kanni*)comes to me. I am ready to suffer punishment and pain, for I am tormented by this endless lust for the woman" (pp. 37-41).

Usually these conversations end with Kamaksi's setting her son

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a trialto draw a picture of Ariyamalai; to bring Kamaksi a piece of silk cloth from her braid, her pearl necklace, and her ring; to ruin the purity of the Brahmans in the village; to destroy the tapas of the Seven Maidens, etc. Each of these trials forms the subject of one of the subsections of the text; and in each case, of course, Kattavarayan is successful and therefore returns to press his demand for Kamaksi's blessing in his dubious romance. To the very end, she is reluctant to sanction his attack on the Brahman girl, although on another level she seems increasingly aware of, and unable to challenge any longer, the fact of his approaching impalement. Death on the stake is Kattavarayan's appointed fate (*viti*)or head-writing (*talaiviti*),as Kamaksi clearly recognizes and eventually states (see p. 175). This is the theme of ambivalence noted earlier: we should observe that several of the trials that Kamaksi sets her son are also seductive, in that they require contact with Ariyamalai (as well as with Kamaksi) and thus serve to feed the fire that is to consume our hero. Kattavarayan receives a contradictory message of encouragement and discouragement from his mother. This confusing double message is then reflected in one of the most striking elements in the entire narrative, that is, the complete lack of resolution in the tensions of the sexual triad at the heart of the tale.

Let us briefly plot these tensions as they unfold in the narrative. Kattavarayan wants Ariyamalai and is prepared to sacrifice everything to attain her, but to the end he defers to his mother's authority and seeks her permission; although he becomes impatient with Kamaksi, even has her bound in ropes and humiliated (pp. 160-62), and eventually decides to steal Ariyamalai on his own initiative, *without* his mother's consent, no sooner has he done so than he brings his stolen bride to Kamaksi, worships his mother's feet with the usual offering of flowers, and once again seeks her blessing (p. 174). Kattavarayan may be prepared to mount the stake, but he is clearly *not* able or willing to choose between his mother and his bride. The tension here remains constant. On the other hand, it is important to notice that the two female figures are *not* conflated (as they seem to be to some extent in the Tamil *sthalapurana* literature and, according to Gananath Obeyesekere's analysis, in the Pattini mythology 24); rather, wife and mother seem to functioin here as two opposed poles between which the indecisive hero unsuccessfully oscillates. Indeed, the basic opposition reproduces itself with reference to much larger sets of female characters, whose relations with Kattavarayan can be clearly mapped out. Like Murukan, with whom he is identified, Kattavarayan has multiple mothers. Aside from Kamaksi, there is the Brahman girl who first gives him birth

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(and subsequently disappears from the story completely); the Paraiya woman who adopts him (also lost to the story thereafter); a separate goddess Kali, or more specifically Vallatu Mankaliyamman, to whom Kamaksi sends him (as having a greater power than hers, p. 125) and who attacks him, eventually swallows him, emits him again as a young child, and then instructs him in having a properly decorated stake prepared (pp. 126-31); and, finally, the Seven Maidens of Kollimalai, who adopt him and teach him magic and who continue to play an important part in his adventures

thereafter. This last group provides a close tie to the Murukan mythology 25 as well as the one figure who seems partly to bridge the opposition mentioned earlierthat of the youngest Maiden (*ilaiya kanni*,parallel to the seventh and always anomalous Krttika) who actually falls in love with Kattavarayan. The story, told in the tenth canto, may be briefly summarized:

> Kamaksi sent Kattavarayan to destroy the tapas of the Seven Maidens, who had been standing on one leg, with their eyes closed, eating only the wind, for twelve years on the top of Kolli Mountain. Cinnan refused, at first, to help him, but he did make Kattavarayan a lute with which he sang to the women: "It is for me," he sang, "that you have been torturing yourselves for so long." The youngest Maiden recognized the truth of this satement and announced that the god had at last come for them from Kailasa. The Seven Maidens came down from their mountain, but Kattavarayan fled from them, taking many formsa tortoise, a goat, an ant, an ear-ring, a mouse. They also transformed themselves in order to chase him. Waiting for him to emerge from a hiding-place, they climbed coconut trees and ate the fruit. Kattavarayan sent Cinnan, disguised as a watchman, to catch them and bring them before Kattavarayan in his disguise as Civapputaiyan (his father). He sentenced them to be tied to a tree and beaten for having taken the garden's fruit.
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> Taking the form of a colorful parrot, "Rankaiyan," he spoke to the Maidens, sat in the hand of the youngest, and was embraced and kissed by her. They went to bathe in the ocean of milk, and he promised to guard their clothesbut no sooner were they in the ocean than he stole their sarees from them. . . .26 Burning with anger, they chased him to curse him, but he ran quickly to Kamaksi without daring to look back at them. She transformed him into a baby rocking in a swing made from branches of the banyan. When the Maidens arrived there and demanded to see Kattavarayan, she opened her third eye and turned them into seven stones (pp. 142-59).

This summary hardly does justice to the colorful metamorphoses and playful ironies of the text, but we may at least notice the repetition of the garden sequence from the frame storywith the innovation here of the hero's complete emancipation from any external control, including that of his father Siva. His revenge could hardly be more complete. Once again he steals the Maidens' clothes (this time not only those of the youngest) in a patent imitation of the Krsna myth, but this time they have no recourse; they end up in the form in which they are often worshiped in the villages, as seven stones. Kattavarayan achieves this result by becoming an infant beside his mother Kamaksia common enough solution to unbearable sexual tension in South Indian myth and folklore. 27 Here the tension seems to arise from the erotic role that Kattavarayan plays with relation to the responsive seventh Maiden, who admits her love for him and even unwittingly embraces him, although she clearly remains in some sense one of his mothers (and we should recall that she is also partly identified with Ariyamalai, born from a lime impregnated with the seventh Maiden's life-force). All in all, this complex linkagemother and lover, chaste but voluptuous ascetic maidenis unacceptable and even dangerous, as we learn not only from the episode's conclusion but also from the motif, commonly applied to the kannimar in village traditions, of the forbidden vision (thus the hero does not dare look back at them).28 There is simply no room for the ambiguous eroticism here to find release; rather, it is quite literally petrified and thus defused, to the prankster-hero's great relief. We may also note the signal irony, a conventional one, involved in the young girl's recognition of Kattavarayan as her loverfor he is, indeed, the god for whom they have been yearning throughout the years of penance, even if he appears in an unanticipated and, in this case, thoroughly frustrating guise.29

Balancing this rather heavy load of maternal attentionKamaksi, Kali, and the Seven kannisare three categories of wives. The central figure, as we have seen, is the forbidden Brahman girl, Ariyamalaias "untouchable" by him as he is in *her* eyes. (Kamaksi several times pointedly refers to her as "untouchable fire.") Then there are two Cetti (merchant class) girls, Ukantalaki, whom Kattavarayan kidnaps in Canto 6, and Annamuttu, whose story is missing from our text but who appears prominently with the other wives in the impalement scene at the end.30 Working our way down the social scale, we now arrive at Kattavarayan's cross cousin, hence his predetermined wife, Karuppalakithe shepherd girl who saves his life at the beginning, during

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his contest with Cinnan and the latter's father in Kerala. Karuppalaki plays against Kattavarayan in a *malyuttam*,a contest

involving goats, then cocks, then quail; she wins twice but loses the third trial, chases him into the temple where he is hiding, and, when he appears to her as Murukan, begs him to marry her. She, too, appears on the scene of the impalement together with the Seven Karuppans. She is seen as the daughter of Perumal-Visnu (hence the cross cousin tie, for Kattavarayan is the son of Visnu's sister Kamaksi), and her father is apparently linked with the Tamil folk deity Karuppan or Karuppannacuvami (see pp. 117-22). 31 In addition to these major figures there are two excluded women whom Kattavarayan toys with and defeatsthe washerwoman Vannaravalli (Vannaranalli in the *Natakam*)and a demonic queen, Campankitaci (pp. 97-100). Both die at our hero's hands, the former after a rather brutal trick (and after arrangements for her marriage to Kattavarayan are under way), the latter after a game of dice (another area in which Kattavarayan excels).

Having outlined this luxuriant series of women who attract the attentions of our hero, we may wonder about the relative paucity of male figures in the story. The only truly prominent and positive male is Kattavarayan's magician-companion, Cinnan the Tottiyan. We should recall that the hero's troubles all begin with his father's vindictive curse, and that his second father, Civapputaiyannote that there is a least a doubling here, although it fails to match the multiplicity of mothersfunctions as Kattavarayan's outstanding opponent, the guardian of Ariyamalai (and as such the object of the hero's attacks and cruel practical jokes). We might thus describe the plot as a struggle in which the low caste hero, aided by his low caste friend and alter ego, is pitted against his father (or fathers) in his love for a high caste, hence unattainable womana love condemned by his divine mother and leading inexorably toward tragedy. Given these basic conditions of the plot, and despite the violence and cruelty described throughout, especially in Kattavarayan's relations with women, we might sense in this hero a peculiar brand of innocence. His doomed struggle, after all, is ultimately (and unfairly) derived from the initial fracture in Siva's wholeness of being, a fracture which precedes Kattavarayan's birth and which produces the tortuous ambiguities of his guardian's role. With the deck stacked against him, as it were, Kattavarayan becomes a kind of wild card, an unpredictable joker obsessed with overcoming his low position, hostile to the oppressive world of social limits but unable finally to escape its compulsions. He is saturated with ambivalencepowerfully attracted to the various female figures but

also repelled by them; never able to resolve their conflicting claims upon him; driven upward toward the untouchable Brahman girl (who, as we shall see, continues to elude him) even as he continues to give vent to his fundamental anti-Brahmanical (or anti-hierarchical) feelings. The underlying theme is one of alienationof man from woman, son from mother, son from malevolent fatheran alienation which proceeds from and reflects the initial act of self-division within the godhead (Parvati's doubt, separation and exile from Siva's androgynous wholeness) and which results in the son's inability to integrate another being, especially a high female being, into his life. 32 Although he has, as we shall see, certain striking elements of personal autonomy, Kattavarayan remains, in another sense, trapped in an antithetical mode.

How does this story, reduced here to its barest skeleton, compare with those of other Tamil "criminal" heroes? Clearly, a major element is the recurring theme of violation, the attack upon conventional order (especially high-caste order with its boundaries). The central symbol of violation, a symbol which Kattavarayan shares with Maturaiviran among others,33 is the ultimate *mesalliance* for which he strivesUntouchable male with Brahman female. Other acts of violation accompany this central dramatic theme. To mention only one more example, there is Kattavarayan's brilliant humiliation of the thousand Brahman villagers: one night he brings a thousand Paraiya men to sleep beside the Brahman wives, whose husbands are simultaneously transported, still asleep, to the beds of Paraiya women; when the couples wake in the morning, they discover the trick only by the fact that each of the spouses suddenly addresses the other in the wrong dialect! To complete the hapless Brahmans' pollution, Kattavarayan impersonates their revered *guru* (Kacikkurukkal) and leads them in a crude travesty of a Brahman *homa* ritual, using the urine of demons as sacred water and producing new sacred threads for them from a buffalo's hide (all this, incidentally, at Kamaksi's instigationpp. 13242). It would be all too easy to interpret this and similar parts of the story as no more than violent anti-Brahman satire (which is, indeed, present in the telling); but this is a temptation to be resisted if we wish to arrive at a deeper understanding of the work. What can be said is that Kattavarayan's assault upon order forms part of the standard dossier of the South Indian low caste hero. To the essential antinomianism we may add other features mentioned earlierthe multiple birth (frequently a descent from heaven in ambiguous circumstances); the mixed ancestry (Brahman-Untouchable, or royal-Untouchable);34 the specific interest in ravishing a virgin, usually a

high caste woman or women; the association with magic and, perhaps, the social and geographical marginality with which magic is connected; the existence of a low caste helper or companion; 35 the tragic flavor, linked to a violent, sacrificial death undergone by the hero; and the hero's position on the boundary as a guardian or gatekeeper, with the ambivalence inherent to that role. Taken together, these items present a rough profile of a prevalent type, although individual heroes may develop one of the themes to an extreme (thus Cutalaimatan, for example, extends the practice of antinomian violation to the point of indiscriminate destruction and slaughter). Still, the list does not suffice. In the case of Kattavarayan, at least, we have to examine a further essential trait, already mentioned earlierthat of his Trickster-like transformability and transformative power.

C. On Binding, Loosing, and the Gambler's Tricks

At first glance it would seem that Kattavarayan meets the three conditions"desecration, violence, and miscegenation"that A. K. Ramanujan has noted as leading to "the eruption of demonic divinity.36 Certainly, as a divinity our hero is indeed close to the demonic pey worshiped in Tamil villages, although we must also draw in certain lines of distinction.37 But the catastrophic progression of the typical local-goddess myth in South Indiain which a village woman undergoes first a violent desecration and then an equally violent apotheosis which threatens the villageis altered in the present case. Here we have no proper apotheosis. Kattavarayan is divine from the very beginning (and persistently identified with Murukan). In addition, he is set off from the pattern of apotheosis by his constant playfulness which, however cruel his games, adds a new dimension to the career of the low caste rebel-hero.

Let us admit at once that Kattavarayan is not the cosmogonic or culture-creating Trickster of North American Indian myths.38 Nor is he a heroic Prometheus whose acts of violation ultimately benefit mankind.39 If we need a parallel, Hermes is perhaps closer than most. In any case, Kattavarayan definitely shares the "funny irregularity," the comic breaking of rules (specifically linked to a low social position) that Grottanelli sees as the Trickster's central quality.40 I follow Hastrup and Ovesen in their attempt to distinguish the Trickster from the closely related culture hero:

> The diacritical feature of the trickster as opposed to the culture hero is that of his intrinsic ambiguity. He is both human and animal, man and woman, good and bad. The trickster *is* a tricky one, whereas the culture hero completes a trick. . . . The culture hero moves from the other world to this world with a strong personal integrity while the trickster stands with one leg in each world, integrating their aspects into one person. It is a permanent transience as opposed to the transitive permanence of the culture hero. 41

"Permanent transience" nicely characterizes Kattavarayan's restless motion, which finds expression in a long series of disguises and metamorphoses as he plays his pranks. He also has the Trickster's characteristic craftiness and cunning as well as his transformative skills, which operate both on others and on himself. We have already noted his association with magic and seen his propensity for assuming animal forms; and we need not be surprised to find him masquerading as as woman:

> Kattavarayan pleaded with his mother to give him permission to capture Ariyamalai; she sent him to ask his uncleperhaps *he* could help. So Kattavarayan went looking for Perumal in Dvaraka. Cinnan took the form of a wandering Kullavantutatan-dancer, and Kattavarayan became a dancing-girl, the daughter of Kattaviryan (= Kartavirya). At first Perumal hid from them, but when he heard of the amazing beauty of Kattaviryan's daughter, he sent for her and pleaded for her hand in marriage; tortured by desire, he promised to give her whatever she asked. As he rushed to embrace her, she announced that she was observing a vow (*nonpu*).He brought her a garland that never faded, the traditional gift of clothes for the bride (*kurai*),and the *tali* marriage-necklace. "What else do you want?" he asked, and the young lady announced: "That you unite with me at once." He closed his eyes and raised his arms, and at that moment Kattavarayan thought of Cinnan, who brought him a rope with which to bind Perumal. Taking his own form, Kattavarayan now appeared before the bound Perumal and demanded a boonthe boon of decorating Ariyamalai with a (wedding) garland. His uncle, ashamed, agreed and said, "Not knowing your magic, I tried to unite with you (*un mayam ariyamal unnai maruva vanten*);"and he asked that no-one ever be told how Kattavarayan had bound him in this way (pp. 100-105).

This canto continues with another escapade in which Kattavarayan, imitating Siva this time, appears as an old man selling bangles to Kamaksi, the Seven Maidens, and, finally, Ariyamalai; 42 at length he succeeds in fastening the tali around Ariyamalai's neck, while she is asleep (pp. 105-112).

The episode, a fairly typical example of our hero's tricks, provides a noteworthy link with the important figure of Kartaviryaanother ambiguous guardian-thief who has been studied carefully by Madeleine Biardeau.43 Kartavirya turns up here in the somewhat surprising form of his supposed daughter, and the text plays happily on the obvious similarity in names (see p. 102 line 35). In fact, this technical similarity also points to deeper affinities, although the text fails to develop this theme. Its major focus in this section is on the motif of binding the god, which is one of the central, recurring motifs of the entire text and a particularly expressive indication of Kattavarayan's Trickster-nature. Binding and loosing is, in a sense, the very essence of his story. He is himself doubly-boundto the world and human birth, through his father's curse, and, as we have seen, to the inaccessible Ariyamalai, through his driving passionbut each time his opponents manage to bind him physically, he easily escapes. In the present instance he humiliates his uncle and leaves him tied and ashamed in an apparent caricature of the pervasive Tamil bhakti theme of binding the god with (human) love: thus Sahadeva binds Krsna with mental ropes in Villiputturar's Tamil *Mahabharata*.44In the bhakti usage, the god allows himself to be captured and tied down in a paradoxical act of self-limitation and in recognition of the bhakta's superior gift of devotion; in our poem, Perumal is the hapless victim of his nephew's cunning prank. Kattavarayan has little difficulty in binding others, including, in the end, Ariyamalai herself. He revels in demonstrating his superiority in precisely this area:

> Kattavarayan was angry at his mother Kamaksi for stubbornly refusing him permission to capture Ariyamalai. Dressed as a conjurer (*añcanakkaran*),he incited the Brahmans, who were looking for Ariyamalai, against Kamaksi: that old woman performing tapas under the banyan tree could show them where the girl was hidden. The Brahmans grabbed Kamaksi by her matted hair and dragged her away, despite her screams. Now Kattavarayan appeared and said, "*I* am the one who stole Ariyamalai; tie me up." They bound him and took him before the king, who ordered him shackled hand and foot and locked inside an iron box with soldiers guarding it night and day under the command of Civapputaiyan.

> Inside the box, Kattavarayan thought, "I have been caught because of my own foolish chatter." He called upon Mutevi to help him and threatened to crack his skull if the goddess did not come. Mutevi appeared, riding her ass. She put the guards around the box to sleep and released Kattavarayan. He shackled the sleeping Ariyappurajan and locked him in the box in his place, and he cut off both sides of Civapputaiyan's mustache.
>
> The Brahmans could not find the king until at length, after sunrise, Civapputaiyan awoke and opened the box. The king emerged, crying, "I have suffered my fate (viti)I tied up that thief, but then *he* tied me! He is very clever; no-one can catch him. If we try to catch him, he catches us. If he comes to call Ariyamalai, we must not ask why." (pp. 160-65)

Although Kattavarayan seems to require the help of the inauspicious Mutevi, with whom he is in any case naturally associated, in fact his escape from his bonds is wholly predictableas is his binding of his opponents. The episode is a fairly close repetition of an earlier one in the story (in Canto 1, pp. 64-66), where Kattavarayan is locked inside a Pillaiyar shrine on Ariyappurajan's orders, only to be released by Cinnan, whom he binds in his stead. There, too, Mutevi arrives to put the hundreds of thousands of guards to sleep so that our hero can make off with the royal elephant. Notice, how, in the episode summarized above, Kattavarayan's escape from his bonds inspires a moment of *anagnorisis* in the king. At this point it finally dawns on Ariyappurajan that there is more to Kattavarayan's escapades than he had known, and that the elusiuve scoundrel has a real power and claim on the Brahman girl. The king suddenly realizes that Kattavarayan cannot be stopped or thwarted and this truth is brought home to him through a perception of what we might call the existential dimension of Kattavarayan's binding and loosing and being bound.

If the gift of slithering out of bonds belongs, along with the love for disguise, animal identities, and sexual

metamorphosis, among the salient traits of the Trickster, so does Kattavarayan's passion for dice. Like Siva, he is a gambler who almost invariably wins by cheating. His favorite game is *cokkattan* (which deserves a study in its own right); this is the game he plays (having taken the form of a marvellous parrot) with Ariyamalai, from whom he wins a pearl necklace, a ring, a thread from her saree and a strand of her hair (Canto 2, pp. 77-78), and, at a later point in the story, with the evil queen Campankitaci (Canto 4, pp. 97-100). The skilled Trickster-gambler, specializing in cokkattan, seems to be a Tamil folk-type. We find him again in the most unusual

of the *Matanakamarajankatai* tales as the Brahman gambler who defeats Perumal-Visnu in his temple, robs the god of his wife, Laksmi, marries the heavenly *apsaras* Rambha, and eventually triumphs by his wits over the god of death himself. 45 The Saiva overtones of Kattavarayan's gambling are clear, although at no point does the text hint at any cosmic-chronological side to his playing. Rather, these games are part of his generalized penchant for trickiness and cunning.

D. On Being Impaled: Catharsis and the Bhakti of Mourning

There are Tricksters who are trapped by their own tricks, who become victims of their own illusionsbut Kattavarayan is not one of them.46 His tragedy takes another form. On one level, he appears to retain, to the very end, an autonomy in will and action that contrasts powerfully with the roles of other characters, especially Ariyamalai, the king, Kamaksi, and Siva. *They* turn out to be subject to viti and also, in some sense, dependent upon our hero's choices, whereas *he* plays at viti, at once accepting and defeating it. On the other hand, this paradoxical triumph has a somewhat Pyrrhic quality, because it leaves the hero all too close to his beginnings, a low caste embodiment of divinity unhappily removed from the divine source identified with the originally androgynous Siva. The Trickster's autonomy is tempered here by certain existential conditions surrounding his birth, his ruling passions, and his prospects for evolution and escape. Nowhere are these tensions more clear than in the climactic episode of the poem, which describes Kattavarayan's ultimate trick, enacted, inevitably, upon the stake:

> Kattavarayan came at last to take Ariyamalai (who had been hidden in Komutalavanku). He called to her: "Daughter of Appapattar and Annatulaci, I am the Paraiya servant of your father; I am going to your father, come now with me." She followed him, a Brahman girl walking with an Untouchable; when a peasant from Acalur saw them thus and asked her what it meant, she said, "This is the evil *vinai* that Siva gave me; it is the fate written on my forehead." Leaving the girl with his mother Kamaksi, Kattavarayan took the form of Arumukam and revealed himself in Putturakam. As he was worshiped there by all, he announced to the king, Ariyappurajan: "I am the king who took Ariyamalai; you can see her tomorrow at the impaling stake. Perform the worship of the stake (*kaluvatipucai*)."Ariyappurajan folded his hands in worship: "We are pleased,

> O Sanmukha, that you are the one who took away our daughterit is our good fortune that this happened."
>
> Kattavarayan returned to Kamaksi, who once again warned him not to touch the Brahman girl; yet she recognized that he would die on the stake. He told her he was determined to experience his viti and asked that she give him the boon of embracing Ariyamalai; Kamaksi gave him sacred ash.
>
> The following day Kattavarayan assumed his royal guise and sat in state at the base of the stake (kalumaram) as the puja was carried out at the order of Ariyappurajanofferings of goats, cocks, pigs, opium, ganj, liquor, millet-meal, etc. were brought to the stake. Cinnan brought Ariyamalai and the two Cetti girls, Annamuttu and Ukantalaki; all three were placed in special boxes (*kuntu*)that had been prepared for them on the stakeAriyamalai to the left, Annamuttu to the right, and Ukantalaki in the rear. Seven carpenters had, at Kattavarayan's instructions, installed secret devices in the wooden contraption of the stake; they mounted the steps together with him. The Seven Maidens came at Kattavarayan's call; he begged them to save him from sorrow 47
>
> Now his father's curse bore fruit. Kattavarayan impaled himself on the stake, to the cries of lamentation from

everyone there. The three women, observing his great beauty, fainted and fell, crying, "What *tapas* have we done to merit this union with him?" Now Siva in Kailasa knew what was happening on earth; he was determined to overcome this unruly child (*mattukk' atankata matam atakka ventum*,p. 188), despite his mother's boon that he would not die in the burning-ground. Siva sent Kundodara in the form of a bee to bore a hole through the stake, but Cinnan forestalled the danger and bound Kundodara; Nandin rescued him from his bonds.

Kamaksi learned from messengers that her son had been impaled and, leaving Ammaiyappakaralan48 to guard the site of her tapas under the banyan tree, she rushed to the stake. She wept and lamented: "My son, my son, this is the fruit of viti, the fruit of Siva's curse. Did I not tell you that the stake was growing as you sought to touch Ariyamalai? You are dying, you are suffering, my beloved son." She was joined in her lamentations by the othersthe thousand Brahmans, the kings and ministers, Annatulaciyammal, Civapputaiyan the Valaiyan, the two Cetti girls, the Seven Maidens, and Ariyamalai herself (blaming herself: "It is all because of me; my mind cannot bear this suffering.") Ukantalaki cried out: "O my guru, Vel-Murukan, you are undergoing this terrible sorrow (*tunpam*)because of us."

Visnu rushed to Siva to plead with him: "Your son is suffering, and

you pay no heed. My sister will weep, and the earth cannot bear her tears." But Siva remained unmoved: the unruly son was ruined through his egoistic nature (*anavam*).Kundodara, Nandisvara, and Narada joined Visnu in his desperate plea: Parvati was suffering terribly; the god must come. At last Siva's heart felt compassion. With the 33 crores of gods, including Vinayaka and Velavar, he came to Tiruccirappalli, to the kingdom of Ariyappurajan, to the stake set up in Paccuruclai. Now it was his turn to plead with his son. Unable to witness Parvati's sorrow, aware of his son's pain, he called to him, "O Paraiyan, Paraiyan, have mercy, come." Kattavarayan, revived by hot water and buttermilk, came down from the stake.

Karuppalaki the shepherd girl appeared together with the Seven Karuppar. Siva ordered the marriage *pantal* to be built. The wedding ceremonies lasted for three days; Ariyamalai, Ukantalaki, Annamuttu, and Karuppalaki all received the wedding talis from Kattavarayan. But after the wedding, Siva called his son and said, "Live together with three wives; forget your desire for Ariyamalai." Then Siva returned with Parvati to Kailasa; Perumal went home to Dvaraka; Brahma and Sarasvati went to Satyaloka; Velavar and his wives went to Tiruttanikai. Kattavarayan took his four wives to Tiruccirappalli and remained there with the two Cetti girls and Karuppalaki; Ariyamalai lived in the forest. (Cantos 12-13, pp. 167-200)

So, because this is the end of our text, the decisive act of hypogamous miscegenation is averted after all, even though the horrendous Brahman-Untouchable marriage does take place. This unexpected conclusionwhich, we must note, is quite different from that of the *Natakam*,where the marriage to Ariyamalai is celebrated without any suggestion that the happy couple will again be separatedhas to be addressed in any attempt to interpret the poem as a whole. I see it as reflecting an unresolved tension embedded in this low caste hero's role. We will return to this question later. For now let us examine the central theme of this episode, the impalement. Has a sacrifice actually taken place, or notand if so, under what conditions or necessity? Irony and ambiguity inform the passage. On the one hand, it is clear that Kattavarayan has to go through with this self-impalement. There is never really any doubt that he will come (literally) to this point: his entire career revolves around the twin facts of his lust for Ariyamalai and the punishment that, as his mother constantly reminds him, accompanies that lust. The whole conclusion seems overdeterminedby fate (viti), his father's curse, and the fact that only through Katta-

varayan's impalement can the initial violation of balance and symmetry be healed, and the goddess restored to her place within Siva's body. The sacrifice can hardly be avoided. On the other hand, there is a strong voluntaristic coloring to the event. Kattavarayan *chooses* to be impaledhe wants to experience (*anupavikka*)his vitiand he thereby demonstrates again the certain freedom that he brings to bear *against* viti and the curse. His dramatic submission becomes a form of mastery, and his impalement becomes his final trick. Like the Trickster he is, he manages to survive, to defeat fate and death, and

even to witness Siva himself begging at his feet. Unlike Maturaiviran, for example, who needs the grace of Minaksi to survive mutilation, Kattavarayan manages alone. 49 He offers no devotion, in effect recognizes no deity as superior to himself. His own divinity is no doubt related to his supreme readiness to undergo this sacrifice, but it is equally to be seen in his ability to emerge from the violent sacrificial arena still intact.

But this victory cuts both ways. Kattavarayan's characteristic escape from death entails an equally characteristic element of loss, a continuation and, perhaps, the culmination of the theme of primary victimization that attaches to our hero from the beginning of his story. The stake is predestined for him. He somehow, cunningly, extricates himself from the natural result of this fate, by partially living it out; but at the same time the redemptive side of the sacrifice also eludes him. Siva's curse was unfair, an injustice remedied, at least in part, by the great god's descent to Tiruccirappalli to plead with his unfortunate son, whose sufferings he can no longer bear. But if we recall the initial conditions of the curse, it appears that Kattavarayan's death on the stake was meant to complete a process of division and devolution within the divinity, or in his relations with the world: the exile of the goddess from Siva's body and her lonely tapas on earth express this tear in the wholeness of reality and reflect a basic sense of painful loss. The moment of sacrifice was to reverse this process so that a reversion to onenessthe androgyne reconstitutedcould take place. In fact, something of this desirable conclusion is achieved: the goddess returns to heaven with Siva after Kattavarayan's multiple wedding. But something of the division also remains. The stubborn and troublesome hero is still with us, in Tiruccirappalli, a piece of divinity left over from the curse and its consequences, hungry for offerings, and still cut off from his desired high caste wife. He has refused the fate of reabsorption that was planned for him and even vanquished Siva, so to speak. The balance has now shifted away from the remote realm of Kailasa toward a still problematic hero enshrined on earth. This

shift, preserved in the poem's conclusion, is a matter of considerable importance.

Kattavarayan is *not* an exemplar of bhakti directed toward a higher deity. On the other hand, he does elicit a kind of devotion toward himself, of a type quite distinct from other forms of bhakti. This is *not* the bhakti of separation (*viraha*)recently analyzed by F. Hardy in a brilliant study, nor is it related to the intellectual bhakti that Hardy sees, e.g., in the *Gita*. 50One could, perhaps, call it cathartic, in the Aristotelean sense of arousing and transformingperhaps also purgingthe tragic emotions of *eleos* and *phobos*.Its outstanding symptom is not ecstasy (the painful delights of viraha) but mourning or lamentation*pulampal*,to use the term that pervades the description of the impalement scene. This type of devotion requires a victim for its lachrymose display of emotion, even if the victim subsequently recoversas seems to be the usual case. Ritualized mourning for this divine victim seems here to be accompanied by a fascination with death, with violence leading to death, and with the notion of (tragic) fate.51 The type is surprisingly widespread in myth and ritual on the level of village religion in South India: Obeyesekere has described an instance (and argued for a link with the *mater dolorosa* of Mediterranean religions) in the Pattini cult in Sri Lanka.52 We find it in the bow song tradition,53 in the Tamil folk genre of *oppari*,54 and in assocation with the gruesome events described in many South Indian folk compositions. Kattavarayan illuminates the cathartic pattern, no doubt a problematic one in the eyes of more heavily Brahmanical traditions and of the predominant Tamil viraha tradition linked to the great temples: and we note that even a popular text such as the *Kattamuttu Natakam* completely eliminates this aspect of the story, proceeding to Kattavarayan's wedding without even hinting at the gory scene at the stake.

E. Encompassed, Encompassing, Unencompassable?

This last development of the story in the *Natakam* is intriguing. Can we discover its logic? We seem to be observing part of a wider pattern. Although I have not sought to present here anything like a systematic comparison of the two Kattavarayan texts I have cited, the *Katai* and the *Natakam*,the surprising disparity of their conclusions calls for comment and may even point the way to a more general interpretation of the story. In one text, the *Katai*,we find a climactic seriesthe impalement, the cathartic bhakti that accompanies it, and, in the end, the unconsummated marriage with Ariyamalai. The *Natakam*

offers the reverse on all three countsno stake, no catharsis, and no apparent difficulty over the marriage. 55 Both series

apparently have their own integrity. It would be especially helpful at this point to be able to compare other, oral versions of the myth. But we may at least speculate on the possible meanings of the two patterns we have before us: why should the impalement, which, after all, produces the resolution of the story and leads immediately to the multiple wedding, be linked to Ariyamalai's ultimate escape from her Untouchable husband's embrace?

We might imagine that the *Natakam* has attempted to Sanskritize or "puranicize" its folk material by eliminating the violent scene on the stake. This does not, however, answer our question. In fact, something rather different seems to have happened here. Far from achieving puranic respectability, the hero of the *Natakam* remains a low caste black magician and Trickster who, as such, marries the forbidden Brahman girl. Indeed, she is no longer truly forbiddenthis, as we have seen, is one of the major dividing lines between the *Natakam* and the *Katai*.The former text seems to have no qualms about Kattavarayan's demonstrated superiority over the standard village hierarchy as exemplified by the pure Ariyamalai. Not so the much longer and more detailed version of the *Katai*,which seems to describe a much more ambiguous and complex relationship between the Untouchable hero and his society. There Kattavarayan is an embattled figure at odds with hierarchical norms, over which he achieves recurrent but always temporary or partial victories (by humiliating the Brahmans, outwitting the king, carrying off and even marrying women of higher castes than his), and which retain a certain degree of power over him to the very end. One is tempted to see in this particular Trickster's revolt the not uncommon theme of violation and boundary transgressions which serve ultimately to reinforce the violated norm. Thus, for all his apparent autonomy and trickiness, Kattavarayan eventually must acquiesce in the final loss of Ariyamalai to the forest, where she remains as inaccessible to him as she was initially, although she now wears his tali wedding chain.

There is a further irony here. The forest is, in fact, Kattavarayan's natural domain, as many of his epithets remind us: he is *vanan katta cami* (p. 49) or *curan kattar cuvami* (p. 132) or *araniyan tan katta antavanar* (p. 167), all meaning "the lord who guards the wilderness." The forest here refers to the wild, uncultivated area beyond (and seen as surrounding) the village. This unsettled and unsettling *katu* (*aranya*, *vana* recall that the major divisions of the *Katai* are called vanam) finds a

proper representative *within* the settled village (*natu*)in the ambiguous figure of the guardian at the gate of the goddess's shrine. This, we recall, is how we meet Kattavarayan throughout Tiruccirappalli and Tañcavur Districts; and it is this same role as guardian that first defines our hero in the two texts we have studied. In a sense, then, Ariyamalai ends by entering *his* sphere at the same time he himself seems to become stabilized with his other wives in the town (Tiruccirappalli). They pass each other on their separate ways in the course of their development. This, too, requires explanation: how are we to understand this final reversal in the Brahman girl's status, her envelopment by the wilderness, even as the wilderness-figure of her husband appears to emerge from this domain and to achieve a new fixity of place?

Perhaps the underlying conceptual issues here are related precisely to the primary, most basic role of our hero as a guardian deity situated between forest and village, outside the shrine of the goddess (Mariyamman; Kamaksi of our myth). Kattavarayan demarcates this boundary. He brings something of the forest into the village to which he is also paradoxically bound. But what is the actual nature of this boundary, and, for that matter, of the intimate tie between this guardian and the figure of the deity within? Certain complexities of the latter relationship have already become evident through Kattavarayan's behavior vis-à-vis his mother, Kamaksi (although his relations with Ariyamalai are equally relevant to this question). In the *Katai*,at least, the linkage seems to be a rather frustrating one rooted in the initial fracture in Siva's being, which immediately produces the guardian's role. More generally, we can perhaps isolate three major patterns which determine this relationship, and the role of the boundary, in different texts and contexts. Two of them are present in the materials we have summarized here.

One pattern seems clearly to require the subordination of the guardian-gatekeeper to another divinity, usually that of the shrine he guards. Cutalaimatan's defeat by Murukan is a case in point. 56 This may well be the predominant pattern in cults such as Kattavarayan's, which also reflect in their organization a division of labor, usually sacrificial labor, so that the pure deity within the shrine can avoid contamination by the necessarily violent acts carried out by his or her servants. The essential notion here is one of encompassment and hierarchy. As is usual in India, it is the inner being (the deity in the shrine, like the divine principle within the body) that is primary, more encompassing, and higher than the surrounding "outer" forms. So in this case the boundary with its gatekeepers is ultimately sub-

ordinated to and, in fact, subsumed by the divinity that it appears to surround and contain. To some extent, the outer zone appears as a limited emanation, replete with violent division, of the more subtle (*suksma*),less differentiated entity within. The relation between the two spheres is worked out in many of the village goddess myths, where the goddess descendsat the beginning of her festivalfrom a cooler, more detached mode of being into a worldly mode marked by heat, sexual arousal, anger, exterior manifestation (e.g., in the form of smallpox) and, in mythic terms, an ambiguous connection to a dangerous demon. 57 The festival helps move the goddess through this descent and back up and away, so that at the end of the cycle she is again cool, remote, and, perhaps, linked in a pacific, non-erotic marriage to her proper (non-demonic) spouse.58 The same progression could be described in terms of the hidden "inner" deity's emerging outward in a temporary and sometimes dangerous sortie to the boundary with its male guardian figures. And the furthest point reached by the goddess in this devolution will undoubtedly be marked by a sacrifice, in one form or another, to be followed by the switch in consorts (demon replaced by the pacific Siva) and a retreat to the original inner, and more encompassing state. Not surprisingly, we find Untouchables playing a key ritual role, apparently representing the demonic male figure of the myth, in the festival enactment of these events.59 But a central element here is the lower figures' complete subservience and ontological dependence upon the higher (or that of the outer on the inner ones). Violent carnivores stationed at the edge of the shrine serve the vegetarian non-combatants within.60 Moreover, the logic of this relation limits the direction of movement: as with the Sinhalese cosmology studied by Kapferer, it is the higher level that moves toward the lower, and back; "given that deities conceived as high in the rank order subsume lower orders in their being, it follows that these same deities can manifest themselves at those various levels which they subsume."61 This is, or appears to be, a securely hierarchical system organized on consistent principles.

But it fails to explain Kattavarayan. If we follow the myth as we find it in both our texts, our Untouchable hero defies this type of relation. As we saw earlier, Kattavarayan is an unpredictable joker who cannot be subsumed. Rather, he consistently mocks and toys with the limited world of normative hierarchy that he finds in the village; and in one of the texts, the *Natakam*,he achieves a clear-cut victory expressed in his marriage to Ariyamalai. In other words, in the latter case it appears that it is the outer boundary zone, with its wilderness

associations, that is seen as primary, in some sense superior, and definitely more encompassing than the surrounded core. The lowest embraces all that is above it: the Untouchable Kattavarayan can incorporate and simultaneously transcend the whole of the social order, even as the forest absorbs all limited forms back into its wholeness. The comparison with the goddess festivals and their myths is instructive. Whereas the goddess eventually retreats back into her shrine, Kattavarayan remains on earth, married to a range of women representative of a wide social spectrum. Moreover, in *his* story, at least, the goddess is relatively helpless beside him. Kattavarayan achieves his final position through a rebellious ascent from Untouchability to a recognized power and cult, an ascent characterized by the constant violation of norms and limits; both the drive toward antinomian violation and the trickster's transformations that accompany it point to the primacy of the wilderness over the limited village order. There is, then, a hierarchy implicit in this view, but it is hardly the one we are accustomed to imagining. Here it is precisely the lowest, most outer sphere that is most dynamic, rich with generative potential, and capable of containing other powers and forms. The stress here is on movement and transformation, on a process which we may call *upward encompassment*thelower expanding to incorporate and ultimately to dominate any initially higher (but actually less autonomous and viable) forms of being.

Something of this pattern is also clearly present in the *Katai*,both in this text's presentation of Kattavarayan's outrageous escapades, with the persistent suggestion of the hero's remarkable autonomy vis-à-vis the village norms, and in its depiction of Ariyamalai's fatethe Brahman girl finally swallowed up and encompassed by the forest, the realm closest to the Untouchable hero. But the overall picture is more complex. For one thing, the conclusion just notedAriyamalai in the forestis susceptible to a rather different interpretation. For the Brahman has his own innate connection with the forest, or with the pure, undifferentiated potential which it may represent. In other words, the apparent opposition we have been exploringhigh and low, inner and outermay, under other circumstances, turn out to conceal a latent and even necessary affinity. At some point the two extremes may well coincide. Put somewhat differently, and schematically, we could envisage the relation between the two poles, exemplified here by the goddess and her trickster-guardian, as two concentric circlesthe goddess safely within the first, the enveloping forest with its male gatekeeper-guardians as the second. The subtlety and refine-

ment of the inner mode, embodying the farthest reaches of *samskara*,can be set against the pure potentiality and somewhat menacing formlessness of the outer wilderness. But in fact either circle can encompass and absorb the other. Everything depends on where one stands and from what context or angle he is looking. What might appear as rigidly fixed in place at either the apex or the base of a hierarchical scale turns out to possess a high degree of fluidity and indeterminacy. In such a system, even the rebellious tricks of an Untouchable hero may well lose something of their sting.

Yet Kattavarayan continues to elude us. If we take the conclusion of the *Katai* seriously, neither of the two patterns we have outlined seems to fit. He is neither subsumed by the higher deitiesin fact, he humiliates them by his suffering and forces Siva to beg at his feet, thereby effectively altering the original, unjust cursenor does he subsume them in his own being, as we see from his continued separation from Siva and Parvati, in his earthly shrine, and from his final loss of Ariyamalai. Even if the joker cannot himself be subsumed, he is unable to subsume the others. He has, it is true, evolved and movedaway from the forest, into the more stable, domestic mode in the town. But this move only freezes and preserves the basic state of fragmentation, imbalance, and alienation that plagues Kattavarayan from birth. He is now truly at home nowhere, neither in forest nor village; unable finally to sever the bonds of hierarchy (his rebellion in fact reinforces them), he remains remote from Kailasa with its promise of wholeness, still embroiled in antithesis, married to low and middle-range females while the higher females he desires are out of reach (Ariyamalai in the forest, Kamaksi in her shrine). 62 Even the restorative (if terrible) sacrifice has been denied him, so that his exile is rendered permanent. Initially a creature of the border, an ambiguous guardian, he remains there, prevented from moving either inwards or outwards toward one of the two related poles. All he retains from his violent and colorful career is his alienation. Is the articulation of this vision connected to the experience of the cathartic bhakti appropriate to this text, and to the social milieu which produced it? Is the logical link between the impalement and the unconsummated marriage the double-edged nature of the former, which then leads directly and inevitably to the latter?

This particular conclusion sets off Kattavarayan from a series of related figures in the world of South Indian village myth and legend. We have a basis for establishing a differential typology in which various antinomian heroesthe village demons (pey), the puranic *asuras*,

bandits such as Maturaiviran and Papadu, the crippled thief-hero of the *nontinatakam*,even, to an extent, the problematic local kingscan be clearly distinguished. This is not the place to develop these distinctions in detail. But perhaps the most striking contrast is actually elsewherebetween Kattavarayan, as we see him in his *Katai*,and the god with whom he is repeatedly identified by this text, Siva's son Murukan. 63 One could, of course, speculate, in the absence of evidence, about the history of this linkage between a Tamil folk deity and the highly popular Murukan; and there are tantalizing questions of possible historical survivals in the Kattavarayan cult: does Kattavarayan's relation with Kamaksi conserve something of Murukan's association with Korravai?64 Are the Seven Maidens of Kollimalai related in any way to the famous image of the goddess on this mountain (*kollippavai*),which took the life of anyone who beheld it?65 But none of this helps us to understand the poem as we have it or to perceive the burden of its hero's identification with this god. The *locus classicus* of the Tamil Murukan mythology is Kacciyappacivacariyar's *Kantapuranam*;and one can easily see certain parallels between this text's version of the myth and the Kattavarayan materials. We have already mentioned the theme of the god's multiple mothers, and, of course, the link with Siva. But there is also the striking theme of the god's multiple marriages. Don Handelman has recently argued, in a subtle study, that Murukan's marriages to Teyvayanai and Valli help to stabilize a deity who has risen, in the course of fighting his asura enemies, from an initial situation of incomplete and undifferentiated integration to one of a higher-order, universal encompassment and holism. The double marriage allows the deity to move downwards again, toward the world in its properly hierarchical order, and to be reconstituted in it in part by the two very different brides he has chosen.66 This description seems beautifully suited to the puranic milieu in which Kacciyappacivacariyar worked. Kattavarayan belongs to a different milieu entirely and to a social background relatively remote from the great Brahmanical temples and their myths. The difference is reflected in our hero's career, with its unilateral directionthe ascent focused on the women he marriesand especially in the final, unhappy outcome of his story. Murukan marries the lowly Valli, a crucial descent which marks the limit of his evolution

into the world and which dramatizes his accessibility to his lowly devotees; the Untouchable Kattavarayan marries above himself in a desperate effort to transcend his situation and as a result of an abortive sacrifice which fails to heal the rift within the godhead. In both cases the marriage stabilizes a process of trans-

formation and effects a change within the deity. But whereas Murukan's marriages incorporate and integrate the social extremes within the god's unfolding wholeness, Kattavarayan fails to reach the upper limit which has held him in thrall throughout his career. Ariyamalai recedes into the distance, and he remains stuck in his enduring state of fragmentation. This resultby no means the only interesting inversion by the *Kattavarayan Katai* of themes from the Murukan mythologyallows us to characterize our text as a kind of *anti-purana* securely rooted in the social and cultural world of the lower castes. In this case as in others, the contrast is based on specific thematic and semantic transformations between texts which express the variation in context. Whereas the purana is interested largely in working out the relations between the god's diverse roles and parts, and between him and the world, and in stabilizing and ordering the process of his devolution from high/inner being to lower, outer forms, the folk tradition sticks to its antithesesexemplified here by the angry and playful victim-hero, at once hostile and bound to hierarchical norms, held in place between forest and temple, whose mode of willed self-sacrifice releases forces of empathy and cathartic identification that can overpower, at least momentarily, even the Brahmans and their great gods.

Notes

1. Or *Kattuvarayan** (as on the cover of my edition)but the correct form is probably Kattavarayan; see below. Like the majority of Tamil folk epic narratives, this one is falsely ascribed to the famous poet Pukalentippulavar. I have used the Ar. Ji. Pati Company edition (Madras: Vakisvari Accakam, 1974). An apparently identical version of the text has been published in Madras by Irattina Nayakar and Sons.

2. Ascribed to Camikkannu Kantar (a Vanniyan from Mettuppalaiyam) (Madras: Irattina Nayakar and Sons, n.d.). This text was kindly made available to me by Alf Hiltebeitel. Other versions of the story, which diverge considerably from the *Katai*,are the *Kattavarayan Kataippatal* (Madurai, 1971), and the texts mentioned briefly by A. Cinkaravelu Mutaliyar, *Apitana Cintamani* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1981), 405. See also Masilamani-Meyer in this volume.

3. Brenda E. F. Beck, *The Three Twins*: *The Telling of a South Indian Folk Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Gene H. Roghair, *The Epic of Palnadu* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

4. We cannot say when this occurred, or from what medium (oral dictation, palm leaves, paper) the printed edition was prepared. On the printing history

of the Tamil ballad, see M. Arunachalam, *Peeps into Tamil Literature*: *Ballad Poetry* (Tiruchitrambalam: Gandhi Vidyalayam, 1976), 73-81; Beck, *Three Twins*,109-110.

5. On Maturaiviran, see D. Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 355-66; on Cutalaimatan, see Marie-Louise Reiniche, *Les Dieux et les hommes*. *Étude des cultes d'un village du Tirunelveli*, *Inde du Sud* (Paris: Mouton, 1979), 202-17.

6. Arunachalam, *Ballad Poetry*,p. 189, faced with this same question, declares: "Ballad poetry would certainly have been better off without this story."

7. The use of the term ballad for these works is imprecise; in effect, the majority of the malai and katai would be classed as folk epic. For a survey of this literature, see Arunachalam, *Ballad Poetry*,passim.

8. In the *Natakam*,Aiyanar is also suggested by Siva and rejected by Parvati. Then Sivasubrahmanya who dwells on Kollimalai decides he must help his mother and takes the form of a baby beside her as she performs tapas; at the age of twelve he becomes her guardian, with the name Kattavarayan.

9. It is not clear if four is meant as a precise figure or simply as "several," as is common in coloquial Tamil.

10. In the *Natakam* (p. 27) he *asks* to be born in response to his mother's suffering because of Siva's curse.

11. Thomas Burrow and Murray B. Emeneau, *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), entry number 1192.

12. *Kattamuttu Natakam*,p. 28. The last line is ambiguous: *matarai* could refer to the women (plural) mentioned earlier, or to the Womani.e., the goddess.

13. See discussion in Shulman, *The King and the Clown*,361-62.

14. The former is used by the *Katai*,the latter by the *Natakam*.

15. The association with Kamaksi of the Kamakkottam and the Kampai River at Kañcipuram is evident.

16. Does this complete the "four" prescribed births? The text is elliptical and rather obscure at this point.

17. At a later point (pp. 63-64), the text specifies 700,000 guards (including Muslim *tulukkar*),1000 Brahmans on elephants, 30 great kings, 300 ministers, 50 other kings, 1000 *tatiyar*,etc. Civapputaiyan's salary for this post is 1000 *pon* (19).

18. See pp. 19, 170. I refrain from developing here the links with Draupadi's hair; see A. Hiltebeitel, "Draupadi's Hair," in Madeleine Biardeau, ed., *Autour de la déesse hindoue*, *Purusartha* 5 (1981), 179-211.

19. She in fact saves his life when Cinnan's father is on the verge of overcoming him. This entire episode is a major focus of the *Natakam*.

20. See A. Appadurai, "The Puzzling Status of Brahman Temple Priests in Hindu India," *South Asian Anthropologist* (1983), 43-52.

21. This pattern recalls the story of Cuntaramurttinayanar, by caste an Aticaiva who is adopted and brought up by a king, Naracinkamunaiyar: *Periya Puranam 151*.

22. Ironicallyreferring to Siva himself?

23. Note, again, the imagery of the fisherman.

24. See my *Tamil Temple Myths* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 427-482.

25. On Murukan and the Krttikas, see Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*,243-52.

26. I omit a further series of humiliations that Kattavarayan inflicts on the Maidens.

27. For examples, see my *Tamil Temple Myths*,151-55, 288.

28. Cf. H. Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India* (2nd. ed., Calcutta: Association Press, 1921), 26. Note that both here and in the frame story it is the youngest kanni who is the pivotal figure. It is also, perhaps, of importance that Kattavarayan impersonates his Untouchable father in order to punish the Seven Maidens.

29. As in the instances of Parvati's tapas for Siva and Valli's *kalavu*-union(union through "stealing" her) with Murukan (but with the opposite result).

30. The *Apitana Cintamani* (see n. 2), loc. cit., citing a *Kattavaraya Natakam*,calls this figure Ukantayi. The *Kattamuttu Natakam* knows her as Ocanti, one of Kattavarayan's *three* wives according to this text (the other two being Karuppalaki and Ariyamalai).

31. On the Karuppans, see Reiniche, *Les Dieux et les hommes*,126 and 199 (noting a relation between Karuppu and Sasta). Our text spells the name consistently as Karuppalaki.

32. I am grateful to Don Handelman for comments on this point (and on this section as a whole).

33. E.g., Natancami: Stuart H. Blackburn, "Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism," *History of Religions* 24 (1985), 261. The marriage of a Brahman woman to an Untouchable male is one of the outstanding motifs of the village goddess myths throughout South India; see Brenda E. F. Beck, "The Goddess and the Demon: A Local South Indian Festival in its Wider Context," in Madeleine Biardeau, ed., *Autour de la déesse hindoue* (see n. 18), 95-96, citing in n. 17 a large body of literature on this motif. Muttuppattan reverses the marriage (Brahman male, Untouchable female): Reiniche, *Les dieux et les hommes*,200-201.

34. Blackburn, "The Folk Hero and Class Interests in Tamil Heroic Ballads," *Asian Folklore Studies* 37 (1978), 131-49, argues that the high caste component in the hero's background is a result of puranicization.

35. Kannamma in Palnadu (Roghair, *Epic of Palnadu*,347); Campuka in Beck's Konku epic (*Three Twins*,132-33).

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36. A. K. Ramanujan, "The Relevance of Folklore," in press.

37. See the fine discussion by Reiniche, *Les Dieux et les hommes*,185-217.

38. See Mac Linscott Ricketts, "The North American Indian Trickster," *History of Religions 5* (1966), 327-50.

39. Klaus-Peter Koepping, "Absurdity and Hidden Truth: Cunning Intelligence and Grotesque Body Images as Manifestations of the Trickster," *History of Religions* 24 (1985), 204-207.

40. Cristiano Grottanelli, "Tricksters, Scapegoats, Champions, Saviors," *History of Religions* 23 (1983), 120.

41. K. Hastrup and J. Ovesen, "The Joker's Cycle," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 7 (1976), 13.

42. As in a Tamil version of the Daruvana myth: *Tiruvilaiyatarpuranam* 32. This episode is missing from the *Natakam*,which picks up the story with Ariyamalai's transformation into a stone as she bathes in the riverthe direct prelude, in that text, to her marriage to Kattavarayan.

43. Biardeau, "The Story of Arjuna Kartavirya Without Reconstruction," *Purana* 12 (1970), 286-303; cf. her "Brahmanes combattantes dans un mythe du sud de l'Inde," *Adyar Library Bulletin* 31-32 (1967-68), 519-30, and her further discussion in this volume.

44. Villiputturar *Paratam* 5.4.33-40.

45. *Matanakamarajankatai* (Madras, 1975), 159-69 (*cutan katai*).Cf. *Kathasaritsagara* 18.2.187-99. K. Zvelibil, "A Contribution to the Study of Tamil Folklore: *Matanakamarajankatai* and *Mayiliravanankatai*,"manuscript, 1985, p. 9, sees the Matanakama story of the gambler as "an audacious and irreverent parody on bhakti legends."

46. See Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons*: *Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 111-12, 124-28. Cf. Don Handelman, "The Ritual Clown: Attributes and Affinities," *Anthropos* 75 (1981), 333: "The trickster is a creator, but is itself radically transformed by its own creations."

47. Two episodes are introduced at this point: the younger sister of the seven Karuppans spills a pot of curd, is beaten by her *mami* (Kali?), and utters a curse, which appears to have the effect of overdetermining Siva's still operative curse (that Kattavarayan die upon the stake); then a Kannitaiyar mounts the stake, longing for the three women (184-85, 187). Both episodes require further elucidation, perhaps in the light of oral versions of the story.

48. A guardian-servant provided earlier by Kattavarayan (24-25).

49. *Maturaiviracuvami Katai* (Madras, 1972), 58-63, summarized in my *The King and the Clown*,358-59.

50. Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*: *The Early History of Krsna Devotion in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

51. See Blackburn, "Death and Deification," 272, on the power of the deified

dead: "They are as powerful as death itself, perhaps because they have met it in its rawest form; in other words, the deified dead have become the violence they have experienced. That force, driven inside them at death, then becomes a source that worshippers can call on to counteract other elemental forces of disease, disaster, and even death."

52. Obeyesekere, *Pattini*,265-70 (note that my use of the term "cathartic" differs from his: see 381-82). For the classic Tamil parallel, see *Cilappatikaram* 18-19.

53. Blackburn, "Death and Deification"; idem, "Oral Performance: Narrative and Ritual in a Tamil Folk Tradition," *Journal of American Folklore* 94 (1981), 207-27. Pulampal-mourning may also be linked with cultic possession (total identification with the victim); cf. *kattiseva* in the Palnadu *virotsavamu*:Roghair, *Epic of Palnddu*,p. 28.

54. See, for example, *Irati Pulampal* of Citamparam Narayana Pillai (Madras, 1927), a mourning-song sung to the dead Kama after his destruction by Siva.

55. Although there is a pulampal scene earlier in the text, at the time of Kattavarayan's trial by magic in Kerala (52-56).

56. Reiniche, *Les Dieux et les hommes*,206-207.

57. Richard Brubaker, "The Ambivalent Mistress: A Study of South Indian Village Goddesses and their Religious Meaning," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1978; cf. C. J. Fuller and Penny Logan, "The Navaratri Festival in Madurai," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48 (1985), 79-105, for a somewhat similar process occurring within a major Brahmanical shrine.

58. Fuller and Logan, "Navaratri Festival," 90-93.

59. Beck, "The Goddess and the Demon," 123-26.

60. See the classic exposition of this pattern by L. Dumont, "A Structural Definition of a Folk Deity of Tamil Nad: Aiyanar, the Lord," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 3 (1959), 75-87. One should also note, however, that the "high," inner figures are necessarily drawnperhaps for existential reasonsto the lower, outer ones; the goddess festivals elaborate this theme.

61. Kapferer, *Celebration of Demons*,124.

62. I am again indebted to Don Handelman for this formulation.

63. If we follow the *Natakam*,we are dealing with a specific, localized form of Murukan, i.e., Sivasubrahmanya from Kollimalai.

64. See *Tirumurukarruppatai* 258.

65. See *Kuruntokai* 89 and 100, with U. Ve. Caminataiyar's notes.

66. Don Handelman, "Myths of Murukan: Asymmetry and Hierarchy in a South-Indian Puranic Cosmology," in press.

3

The Changing Face of Kattavarayan

Eveline Masilamani-Meyer

A look at the basic story of Kattavarayan tells us that this god is a criminal. 1 His crime: the abduction of a Brahman maiden. His punishment: death at the "stake."2 One version of the story seems to confirm that Kattavarayan has a character attributable to a criminal. Another version of the story, however, shows us an altogether different Kattavarayan; one who, far from fitting the description of a criminal, could rank as a model hero.

It is the disparity of character which Kattavarayan displays in different versions of his story that I wish to present and analyze in this paper. The comparison is meant to show how a god changes and to provide some explanations as to why he changes.

The changes in Kattavarayan's character can best be illustrated by a comparison of his changing relationship with the other persons figuring in the story. In the first part of this paper I deal with Kattavarayan's relationship towards his superiors: his parents, both divine and earthly, the king, and the Brahmans. In the second part, Kattavarayan's relationship with his women, the seven maidens, is explored.

In his relationship with others, Kattavarayan frequently makes use of his divine power and magic and of his gift to take on various forms and disguises. This aspect is discussed in part three. The fourth part deals with Kattavarayan's death, his apotheosis and the symbolism of the stake. This is followed by some observations regarding the basic story of Kattavarayan and the reasons which could have led to the changes in the narrative and the character of Kattavarayan.

In the last part I touch briefly upon the temples and present cult of Kattavarayan.

The three versions of the Kattavarayan story which are used in our comparison are:

1. *Kattavarayacuvami ammanai*,written on palm leaves. 3 This version is indicated henceforth by *Ammanai*.

2. *Kattavanar cuvami ecal*.4 References to this version are marked *Ecal*.

3. *Kattavarayacuvami katai*,published by B. Irattina Nayakar and Sons, Madras, 1980.5 References to this version shall be marked *Katai*.

Of the three versions, the *Ammanai* is the most coherent and the longest. It may well be the earliest version because it gives the fullest account of the story, does not show the discrepancies we find in the *Katai* and follows more faithfully the patterns of the existing cult of Kattavarayan. The temples mentioned in the *Ammanai* as having been established for Kamaksi and Kattavarayan are among the oldest and most important centres where Kattavarayan is worshipped.

In the *Katai* the narrative becomes more complex, the style less pure. As opposed to the other two versions, the *Katai* abounds in colloquial expressions and words borrowed from Telugu and Urdu (often incomprehensible even to the native Tamil speaker).

The *Ecal* is an abridged and somewhat altered form of the *Ammanai*.I make use of it only where it significantly deviates from the *Ammanai*.

A. Kattavarayan's Relationship with His Superiors

His Divine Parents

Both the *Ammanai* and the *Katai* begin with a sin of Parvati. To test if Siva truly feeds all the living beings, she hides an ant in a box. As punishment for her mistrust, Siva orders her to create a flower garden.6 Kattavarayan is to be the watchman of this garden. In the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan is born from a deer created in Siva's mind. The *Ecal* has Siva and Parvati play in their form as deer with the result that Kattavarayan is born from their union. In the *Katai* Siva simply creates Kattavarayan, and Kattavarayan's birth from a deer happens later.

As son of Siva and Parvati, Kattavarayan guards the flower garden until the seven maidens (*kannimarkal*)come to bathe

in a nearby pond or river. They pick flowers and fruits for the worship of Siva. Kattavarayan, who sees this, steals the clothes of the youngest maiden. The other six maidens report this to Siva who then pronounces the

following curse (*Ammanai*):Kattavarayan shall be born on earth as a son of Brahmans, spend some time in the house of a low caste weaver (*paraiyan*),later grow up in another house where he will get a name, and finally, because of a woman, die on the stake. The seven maidens will also be born on earth. Isvari then pleads with Siva, and he adds to the curse the boon that Kattavarayan and the seven maidens will become deities.

In the *Ecal I*svari does not intervene. Siva, along with his curse, grants Kattavarayan the boon to become a god.

In the *Katai* Siva's curse is curt: "Be a Brahman, a Pariah, a fisherman, one on the stake!" But the goddess interferes and alters the curse to the effect that Kattavarayan shall not die. Thereupon she herself is cursed by Siva. He orders her to leave his left side and to go (to earth) like an evil spirit. This curse will be lifted when Kattavarayan is on the stake.

Siva's curse, and how it is pronounced, is already an indication of Kattavarayan's further relationship with his divine parents. Siva is the ultimate source of power, without whose grace Kattavarayan cannot be saved. In both the *Ammanai* and the *Katai* Siva tests his son's determination to die on the stake, but in the latter version the test is akin to a punishment meted out to Kattavarayan for his pride (see below). This pride is reflected, for instance, in the manner in which Kattavarayan introduces himself to the various people he meets. In the *Katai*,no matter what form he is in, Kattavarayan identifies himself as the son of Siva, although thinly disguised, and not as the son of a Pariah. This has the effect that it places our hero on a higher plane but lowers Siva. 7

As a contrast, in the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan simply relates his story: his birth, siva's curse, and subsequent boon. Kattavarayan's somewhat closer relationship with Siva in the *Ammanai* is also made clear by the fact that Siva feeds him milk when he cries, abandoned in the forest by his Brahman parents. Incidentally, through his father's milk Kattavarayan receives the gift of knowing his previous birth(s). This gift he receives from his mother, the goddess, in the *Katai*.

Kattavarayan is the devout child of Kamaksi in both the *Ammanai* and the *Katai*.In the *Ecal* the goddess's role is minimal. However, whereas the *Ammanai* consistently shows Kattavarayan in the role of a devotee towards a goddess (who is also his mother), we find that in the *Katai* Kattavarayan's role as child of the mother (-goddess) is emphasized. Not surprisingly Kattavarayan (in the *Katai*)is at one point burnt by Kamaksi and later falls into her hands as a child. Again,

in order to save her son from the anger of the seven maidens, Kamaksi turns Kattavarayan into a child. In this version Kamaksi plays the true role of a mother. She worries about him, tries to deter him from his intention to abduct the Brahman girl Ariyamalai; she even gets irritated by his constant nagging for her permission in this endeavor. 8 She gives Kattavarayan various tests to take his thoughts off the Brahman girl and she tries various times to make him agree to a proper marriage with his cross-cousin (the daughter of Visnu). The tension between mother and son seems to mount and at one point, towards the end of the story, Kattavarayan has the old lady beaten up by the Brahmans.9 Kattavarayan says it is to break her pride because she keeps refusing him the permission to abduct Ariyamalai.

Siva's curses place the goddess and Kattavarayan at par: both have to be on earth, both have to atone for their sin. Kamaksi does this by means of tapas, Kattavarayan by fulfilling his fate (curse).

In the *Ammanai* Kamaksi remains aloof, enthroned as goddess and wife of Siva (Ekamparar). It is Kattavarayan's steadfast devotion to Kamaksi that causes her to respond to him, to even follow him to the various places where he establishes temples for her after his deification.

The fierce counterpart to the relatively benign Kamaksi in the *Ammanai* and the *Katai* is Kali. Like Kamaksi, Kattavarayan considers her his mother (*tay*).It is again in the *Katai* that Kali's motherhood, coupled with a sense of antagonism towards her son, is more in evidence. Kattavarayan visits Kali to obtain from her the boon which Kamaksi

refuses to grant him: the abduction of the Brahman girl. Kali tends the tree which will be the stake on which Kattavarayan has to die. Before the tree is cut, Kattavarayan proves his skill by catching the weapons Kali whirls at him. He is finally swallowed by her. Kali, however, cannot bear the kicks of Kattavarayan inside her belly and by means of a magic ointment (*añcanam*)she discovers who he is, releases him, and carries him in her arms as a child. Kali finally grants Kattavarayan the permission to abduct Ariyamalai, but not without warning him a last time that he will have to suffer for it on the stake.

Kattavarayan's meeting with Kali occurs early in the *Ammanai*.Here he visits Kali for a different reason. After he has killed the birds in Kali's forest,10 conquered an assortment of demons and Asuras (muni) sent by Kali, Kali realizes that no mere mortal has come to call on her. She receives him, and after listening to his story, she grants him his wish and bestows on him her musical instrument (kinnaram),11 her drum, her magic sword, various powerful spells and mantras (*mantiram tantiram*),and the art to change his form.12

In brief, a mother-son relationship between Kattavarayan and the goddesses (especially Kamaksi) is more evident in the *Katai*.This relationship is not without tension, a sign that perhaps Kattavarayan experiences the motherly bond as too constricting. The *Ammanai* sees Kattavarayan in the role of a respectful devotee of Kamaksi, and Kamaksi as a benevolent goddess who intercedes with Siva on behalf of her devotee. Neither Kamaksi nor Kali play an active role in Kattavarayan's adventures and his abduction of Ariyamalai, but they do provide him with the necessary power or weapons (e.g., Kali's sword). Here it is not Kali who guards the tree for the stake, but Maci Periyannacami, the god who rules the Maci hill, the place where the particular tree used for the stake, grows. 13

His Earthly Parents

Kattavarayan's closeness to the goddess(es) in the *Katai* compensates for the minimal relationship he has with his earthly mothers. The sequence of Kattavarayan's births in the *Katai* is as follows: an unknown Brahman woman swallows him in the form of a lime, gives birth to him and abandons him. He is found by an equally unknown Pariah woman and again abandoned. Then, seeing a female deer (Civapputaiyan's deer), Kattavarayan places himself on a blade of grass. The deer swallows him, and Kattavarayan is born again. A Pariah man finds him. He hands the child over to the same Civapputaiyan, a fisherman. In his house Kattavarayan grows up. For an explanation of this rather confusing sequence we have to turn to the *Ammanai*.Here Kattavarayan is born as a boon to two named Brahmans, Anantanarayanan and his wife Mankammal of Kalattur. The astrologers predict Kattavarayan's unfortunate destiny. He is abandoned in a forest where Siva and Parvati tend to him. A Pariah woman finds the child but is told the true identity of Kattavarayan in a dream. Knowing she would sin in raising a Brahman child, she brings him to Ceppilaiyan (the *Ammanai's* counterpart to Civapputaiyan) and his wife Cankapillai, who raise him. Clearly two events which are separated in the *Ammanai*,Kattavarayan's first birth from a deer (mentioned above) and his being looked after by Siva and Parvati in the forest, have converged in the *Katai*.Moreover, with the deer birth coming third in the *Katai* (rather than earlier, as in the *Ammanai*)as part of the story that leads to Kattavarayan's adoption by Civapputaiyan, the basic three part sequence required by Siva's curseBrahman-Pariah-fishermanis replicated in the *Katai* treatment of that third episode. Kattavarayan's birth from Civapputaiyan's deer corresponds to another high caste birth, and the episode

then introduces another Pariah to bring him to Civapputaiyan so as to complete the sequence.

Although Civapputaiyan (*Katai*)is of low caste, he is nevertheless the king's chief watchman. Fate wills it that he is responsible for the protection and security of Ariyamalai, and this makes him the enemy of his own son, Kattavarayan. Thus in one episode Kattavarayan disfigures his father by cutting off his moustache (certainly the greatest indignity that could happen to a policeman or a watchman). Except once, when Kattavarayan leaves his father's place to find his real mother, Kamaksi, there is no love lost between father and son.

This is not so in the *Katai*.Ceppilaiyan's role as father of Kattavarayan contains some tragic moments. Ceppilaiyan here is also chief watchman of the kingdom, but he has nothing to do with Ariyamalai's safety. Still, because of his position he has to follow the king's order and arrest Kattavarayan, who has to stand trial for the abduction of Ariyamalai. Ceppilaiyan

fulfills the order with a heavy heart. His wife is equally distressed at the news of Ariyamalai's abduction by her son. She laments and cries. She is the one who warns Kattavarayan that his beauty would lead to tragedy, that he should avoid the high caste streets; and while Kattavarayan journeys to Kali, she is thoroughly distressed and sends her husband to find her missing son. Even Kattavarayan's Brahman parents show some sentiments towards their son: they rejoice when his identity is revealed to them.

A very large part of the *Ecal* describes how Ceppilaiyan tours the country in search of Kattavarayan. The king is adamant to have the sinner (Kattavarayan) produced before him and he threatens Ceppilaiyan that failure to find his son would lead to Cepilaiyan's own death at the stake.

The King

In its treatment of the relationship betwen Kattavarayan and the king, the *Katai* stands in sharp contrast to the other versions. In the *Katai* the king (Ariyappurajan) is portrayed as a sort of godfather to Ariyamalai. It is the king who exhorts the Brahmans to ask the gods for a child boon, it is he who bestows wealth on Ariyamalai, it is he who has a strong fortification built for her, and it is he who appoints Civapputaiyan as her guard. Needless to say, he is no friend of anyone who tries to abduct his adopted daughter. Twice he arrests our hero, but Kattavarayan escapes each time (with a little bit of help from Mudevi who puts the king, soldiers, and guards into a deep sleep). 14 Once Kattavarayan imprisons the king in the very box in which the king

had enclosed him. Kattavarayan also denigrates the king when, disguised as the king himself, he deliberately delivers a false judgment, having disposed of the evidence in favour of the accused washerwoman Valli, and then decrees a cruel and unjust punishment. Only at the very end are Kattavarayan and the king reconciled. The king invites him and his three wives to stay in Tiruccirappalli.

In the *Ammanai* the king (Ariyappan) shows a very friendly disposition towards Kattavarayan. He assigns him the job of chief watchman over his kingdom. When the Brahmans accuse Kattavarayan before the king and demand that he be punished for Ariyamalai's abduction, the king is reluctant to believe them. It is only when the Brahmans threaten to kill themselves that the king orders Kattavarayan to be arrested. Throughout the story Kattavarayan shows the king due respect. The same is true in the *Ecal* where, however, Kattavarayan is not in the employ of the king. Both the *Ammanai* and the *Ecal* depict the king as a just ruler. In the *Ecal* all events center around the king, and Kattavarayan's story unfolds at the king's court in an altercation between the accused, Kattavarayan, and the victim, Ariyamalai.

Kattavarayan's mockery of the king in the *Katai* can be read as a sign of Kattavarayan's self-importance and arrogance: being a god, he can scoff at earthly laws, he is not bound by human moral codes, and no matter how strong the fetters that are placed on him, he cannot be subdued. He truly is king, as his name, Kattavarayan (guard-king) implies. It is perhaps significant that this name is much more frequent in the *Katai* than the *Ammanai*,where he is most of the time called Kattavan, the name given to him by Ceppilaiyan. Kattavarayan's superiority over earthly bonds, however, is also evident in the *Ammanai*.He reduces the chains on his arms to powder, and it is only because he agrees to it that Kattavarayan can be brought before the king in chains. Here Kattavarayan's superiority, however, does not lead him to insult the king.

The Brahmans

The greatest deviation of the *Katai* from the *Ammanai* is in the way in which Kattavarayan's relationship to the Brahmans is treated. Nowhere is Kattavarayan's evil nature more forcefully exhibited than in his deliberate humiliation and defilement of the Brahmans.

A small indication of Kattavarayan's deviation from his otherwise correct behaviour towards the Brahmans is found already in the *Ammanai*.When the Brahmans lament over the fact that they have been defiled by the Pariah's abduction of Ariyamalai, Kattavarayan,

disguised as a Brahman, 15 counsels them to cut off and throw away their hair locks (*kutumi*)and sacred threads (marks of their Brahmanhood). This would redeem them from their affliction. When the Brahmans follow his advice, Kattavarayan smiles. He quickly hides his smile when the Brahmans look at him. Kattavarayan obviously enjoys his joke, but one feels that he did not play it with vicious intentions.

In the *Ecal*,Ariyamalai, during her wordy duel with Kattavarayan, accuses him of having beaten her father. Kattavarayan admits that he grabbed her father (the Brahman) by his hair lock and beat him, but he had reason to do so: he had caught her father stealing the god Rama's belt. Apart from these instances there is nothing to indicate a disrespect towards the Brahmans, and even the quoted incident in the *Ammanai* does not necessarily signify a prejudice against them. Kattavarayan also plays his jokes on the soldiers.

In the *Katai*,Kattavarayan's first ridicule of the Brahmans takes place early in the story. Ariyamalai's servants, punished by her for not delivering Kattavarayan's love letter to her, seek help from the Brahmans.16 It being night, the Brahmans take the servants to be evil spirits and pelt them with stones. When they recognize the servants and hear their story, they rush to the tree in which Kattavarayan is sitting and throw stones at him. Kattavarayan causes the stones to stick to the leaves of the tree. The Brahmans then attempt to pull Kattavarayan from the tree, with the result that in the end the 1000 Brahmans hang in the tree, each one holding onto the legs of another. Kattavarayan releases them from their plight. They fall down. Nearby a mule stands ready at Kattavarayan's command. One Brahman (Ariyamalai's father, Appapattar) holds onto the mule's tail and is about to strike it to chase it away when he becomes stuck to it. Another Brahman rushes there to help and also gets stuck. One Brahman after another rushes to help until all the 1000 Brahmans and their wives are stuck in a row to the mule and are dragged through the streets of the Agrahara.

One could perhaps justify Kattavarayan's action by seeing it as a punishment for the Brahmans' transgression of *ahimsa*.Nevertheless, it would seem highly exaggerated, as indeed are all Kattavarayan's punishments. Even if we could accept this episode as a practical joke played on the Brahmans in order to teach them a lesson, one cannot excuse the manner in which Kattavarayan pollutes their purity.17 It is noteworthy that Kattavarayan receives the order to defile the Brahmans from Kamaksi, but how he does it is left to him, and even

the goddess later complains that her son has taken the matter too far. Kattavarayan commands his servants, Yama's demons (a gift from his mother, Kamaksi), to make each Brahman male sleep beside a Pariah female and vice-versa. As if this were not enough, he later poses as a Kacikkurukkal and tells the Brahmans that their sin will be expiated if they throw their hair locks (kutumi), sacred threads, *pañcankams* and turbans into the homa fire. 18 After the Brahmans have done all this, Kattavarayan gives them, among other things, demon's urine instead of sacred water to drink and fashions new sacred threads and turbans for them out of cowhide. Then he tells them to bathe. When they are in the water, the leather swells up and begins to smell. It is only at this point that the Brahmans realize that they have been tricked.

These anti-Brahman episodes are apparently later additions to the Kattavarayan story.19 They are still now in the repertoire of the professional singers. They are, however, usually not sung anymore.20 What strikes us is that the Brahmans are depicted as very gullible and unobservant people who seem to follow their caste rules mechanically and stolidly, who are so engrossed in their *acara* that they cannot make room for exceptions, nor see the god when he stands in front of them. Of all the personae of the play we should expect the Brahmans to be the ones who would recognize a god. Although they realize that Kattavarayan has tricked them, they do not ask themselves who the trickster could be. Their only concern is to have proper punishment meted out to the man who abducted their daughter. Kattavarayan's ill-treatment of the Brahmans is made worse by the fact that they are his potential in-laws (all of them, because Ariyamalai is always described as daughter of the 1000 Brahmans) and, after all, in the *Katai* it is Kattavarayan's desire for Ariyamalai which is the moving force of the plot and not his wish to become a god.

B. Kattavarayan's Relationship With His Women

Ariyamalai

Kattavarayan succeeds in all three versions to take Ariyamalai captive. One would suppose that the abduction and Kattavarayan's relationship with Ariyamalai are of sufficient importance to deserve detailed descriptions. Strangely enough, the *Katai* mentions the abduction only in passing: Kattavarayan, in the form of Isvara, tells his demons to settle

Ariyamalai at Komutalaippar.21 The next we hear

of her is when Kattavarayan disguises himself as a Pariah (a Vettiyan whose profession it usually is to dig graves and attend to the burning corpses). He tells Ariyamalai that her father (Appapattar) is dying and that he will bring her home. On the way Ariyamalai wearies, and Kattavarayan says to her with arrogance (anavam): "You eat ghee and rice (every day), but you cannot walk (a short distance)." 22 Then he leaves her. A farmer asks her why she is walking with a Pariah. She replies that it is her fate (or bad *karman*)given to her previously by the three-eyed one. (This is one of the references which identify Ariyamalai with the youngest maiden, cursed by Siva to be born on earth.) Kattavarayan then brings Ariyamalai to Kamaksi's place without the latter's knowledge.

We see Ariyamalai again at the end as one of the three women who are on the stake with Kattavarayan. When Kattavarayan has fulfilled his fate and has left the stake alive, he gets married to Ariyamalai, Ukantalaki, Annamuttu, and Karuppalaki. In the end, however, he gives in to Siva's counsel: he forgets Ariyamalai and lives with his other three wives in Tiruccirappalli. It is a rather disappointing end to what began as an intense love story. Kattavarayan first falls in love with Ariyamalai when he breathes the fragrance of the water she bathed in. To get a look at her, he changes himself into a fish and gets entangled in one of her locks. Kattavarayan has various other encounters with Ariyamalai. Usually he is disguised (e.g., as bangle seller) or he takes on another form (e.g., that of a parrot). These episodes, replete with erotic imagery, serve to depict the passion of the two lovers, but a true face-to-face meeting is avoided in the story. In this same version, Ariyamalai's actual identity as the youngest of the maidens (the one whose clothes he stole in the flower garden) is only briefly stated, and Kattavarayan does not seem to be aware of Ariyamalai's identity.23

Whereas in the *Katai* Kattavarayan's main goal is the possession of Ariyamalai (he says he does not care if he has to die on the stake, but at least he wants to have Ariyamalai), in the *Ammanai* the abduction of Ariyamalai is only a necessary step on the way to Kattavarayan's apotheosis, his main aim. In the *Ammanai* he literally enchants Ariyamalai with a spell. When she follows him, Kattavarayan attempts to dissuade her. He makes it clear to her that he is a Pariah, but this has no effect on her. We are not told whether this is because she is truly in love with him (her first sight of Kattavarayan, before she is enchanted by his spell, makes her swoon), or because of the spell. Kattavarayan settles Ariyamalai in Komutalaippar and marries her there

with all the gods as witnesses. In the *Katai* Kattavarayan marries Ariyamalai before he abducts her. He tricks her, and after she wakes from her enchantment, she is less than pleased and decides to drown herself. Kattavarayan then turns her into a stone, from which state a puja releases her.

In the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan also insists throughout that he is inferior to Ariyamalai. In an idyllic scene we see Kattavarayan bringing fruits to Ariyamalai and exhorting her to eat first. She refuses as the wife should eat after her husband has eaten, but Kattavarayan uses the argument that he is a Pariah and she a Brahman, and therefore she should eat first. Shortly before Kattavarayan decides it is time for him to mount the stake, he reveals his true identity to Ariyamalai. He also tells her that she and the other six maidens will become goddesses. Furthermore, right from the beginning of the story, Kattavarayan is aware that Ariyamalai is the youngest maiden, the indirect cause of Siva's curse. When brought to trial, Kattavarayan explains to the king and the Brahmans that he has committed no crime: he did not abduct Ariyamalai, on the contrary, it was she who followed him, despite the fact that he tried to dissuade her explaining to her that he is a Pariah (Kattavarayan conveniently forgets to mention that he placed her under a spell). Finally Kattavarayan discloses his Brahman birth. King and Brahmans rejoice and urge Kattavarayan to bring Ariyamalai back and to live happily with her. Kattavarayan, however, explains that his fate is different.

In the *Ecal* Kattavarayan and Ariyamalai are depicted as opponents. Brought before the king they accuse each other, Ariyamalai insisting that Kattavarayan used various tricks and spells on her to abduct her, whereas Kattavarayan maintains that Ariyamalai fell in love with him and followed him when she saw his beauty. Perhaps the scene is nothing but a quarrel between lovers. In any case in this version Ariyamalai turns out to be the perfect match for Kattavarayan: she is his cross-cousin (i.e., Kattavarayan's mother's brother's daughter). This version also makes it clear that Ariyamalai

is the youngest of the maidens.

The Seven Maidens

In both the *Ammanai* and the *Ecal* we are told that the seven maidens have to be born on earth due to Siva's curse. The *Ecal* makes only the briefest mention of their names, places of birth, and the circumstances under which Kattavarayan meets them. The *Ammanai*,however, describes these meetings in detail. In the *Ammanai* all the maidens are

in some way of help to Kattavarayan, and most of them feed him. I list the maidens in the order they appear in this version.

1. Cavutayi born in Kalattur. Kattavarayan first asks her for curds and buttermilk. He is in the disguise of a soldier. Then he kills the cock which she has raised and dedicated to her family deity Muttukkaruppan. As a gypsy, Kattavarayan revives the bird and advises everyone to worship Kattavan and to name their children Kattavarayan, Kattayi, and Parimalarayan (i.e., after him).

2. Karuppayi from Kaccinakar. Kattavarayan as an old Brahman asks her for milk and curds.

3. Puvayi from Paccur. Kattavarayan eats chicken curry and drinks liquor at her shop. Puvayi later promises the soldiers to help them arrest Kattavarayan, and when he comes to her shop a second time, she serves him a curry meal and liquor in which she has mixed some drug so that Kattavarayan faints.

4. Nalli from Puttur or Piccantarkovil (Puttur, Ariyamalai's birth place, lies next to Piccantarkovil). Nalli is Ariyamalai's washerwoman. She hands Ariyamalai's clothes to Kattavarayan so that he can place a spell in them.

5. Ontayi from Vairicettippalaiyam, born into a merchant family. She is abducted by Kattavarayan and brought to Komutalaippar to be a helper and friend to Ariyamalai.

6. Nallatankal from Manpitimankalam. She is a shepherd girl who climbs up the stake to quench Kattavarayan's thirst with buttermilk.

These episodes and their sequence are reminiscent of a puja. Kattavarayan is mainly a family or clan deity and he still receives the offerings of meat and liquor. Curds, milk and buttermilk are known to be cooling substances. These are often offered to devotees who perform (or have performed) particularly difficult vows (sacrifices) such as walking over hot coals.

In the *Katai* we are faced with a great confusion regarding the seven maidens. All the maidens just mentioned play a part in the *Katai*,but they are never equated with the original seven whose encounter with Kattavarayan in the flower garden leads to Siva's curse. Their identity, however, becomes clear upon a comparison with the *Ammanai*.Campankitaci is a great gambling lady. Kattavarayan defeats her in the game with the help of Cinnan who steals her magic bone. Kattavarayan releases the unfortunate kings who had lost the game, and then he kills the lady. Clearly Campanki corresponds to Cavutayi, which gives her the only reason to be in the story. Similarly we are

never told who Pupi is. Kattavarayan gets thoroughly drunk at her shop and thus can easily be bound by the king's soldiers. Pupi again is no other than the maiden Puvayi of the *Ammanai*.The other maidens in the *Katai* are Valli, the washerwoman; Ukantalaki, corresponding to Ontayi; Karuppalaki, corresponding to Karuppayi; Nallatankal; and one extra, Annamuttu, who appears mysteriously towards the end of the story and becomes one of Kattavarayan's wives. Neither the *Ammanai* nor the *Ecal* can offer an explanation for Annamuttu.

The *Katai* tells us of two sets of maidens: the first are the maidens from the Kolli hills. They are the ones who raise Kattavarayan and teach him the art of magic. The second set of maidens resembles the original set in the flower garden. The youngest of these maidens recognizes Kattavarayan as the god they have been doing tapas for. They pursue him, but

he eludes them by taking various forms. In the end Kamaksi curses the maidens to become stones in order to save Kattavarayan from their anger. These maidens are perhaps a projection of the seven maidens of the Paccai hills in the *Ammanai*.In that text, on his way to see Kamaksi, Kattavarayan passes these hills and steals some fruits in the maidens' garden. Enraged, they set fire to the mountain. When Kattavarayan tells them who he is, they are pleased and wish to accompany him to Kamaksi. He tells them that this is not necessary and that he will bring Kamaksi to them, a promise he keeps.

In the *Katai* Kattavarayan's relationship with the *true* maidensi.e., the ones who correspond to the *Ammanai*is very ambiguous. He kills two of them, Valli and Campankitaci. He marries three: Ariyamalai, Karuppalaki, and Ukantalaki. He helps one, Nallatankal. The treatment of Nallatankal is consistent in both the *Katai* and the *Ammanai*.Nallatankal becomes the innocent victim of her family's wrath, perhaps a reflection of her "true" story. 24 In the *Ammanai* the family scolds her because she returns with a pot full of rice, gift of Kattavarayan, instead of the money she should have gained selling the buttermilk. In the *Katai* Nallatankal inadvertently breaks the pot of buttermilk when she trips at the sight of the troups and crowds that have assembled to watch Kattavarayan die on the stake. When Nallatankal gets beaten by her mother-in-law and her husband(s), Kattavarayan intervenes.25 Kattavarayan's intervention on her behalf only becomes clear in connection with the *Ammanai* where it is she who offers Kattavarayan buttermilk when he is on the stake.

Whereas in the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan marries only Ariyamalai, in the *Katai* he has three wives (if we include Annamuttu, four). According to the *Katai*,Karuppalaki is Visnu's (Perumal's) daughter,

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i.e., she is Kattavarayan's cross-cousin and therefore his legitimate bride. Iconographically Kattavarayan is often depicted with two women: Ariyamalai, on his right, and Ontayi (Ukantalaki), on his left (see plates 1 to 3). One may wonder why it is the Cetti girl Ontayi rather than Karuppayi (Karuppalaki) who is given this pride of place. One could argue that Kattavarayan's iconography was modelled on that of Murukan (with whom he is identified in the *Katai*)or Maturai Viran. Of the two wives of these gods one is of high caste, and the other stems from a tribal, or low caste, origin. 26 With Ariyamalai already taking the position of the high caste wife, Karuppalaki (being his legitimate wife) is necessarily eliminated. Ontayi belongs to the merchant caste. She comes from Vairicettippalaiyam, a place named after Vairicetti whom Kattavarayan subdues. Vairicetti has found a place in the Kamaksi temple of this village (see below), and one can conjecture that Ontayi's place beside Kattavarayan has a historical reason, one connected with this Cetti family's previous influence in the area. As the case may be, we can see in the iconographic representation of the two wives an attempt at assimilating Kattavarayan with other, more famous deities such as Murukan, Aiyanar, and Maturai Viran.

Summarizing Kattavarayan's relationship with superiors and women, we notice in the *Katai* a trend in Kattavarayan to free himself from various bonds: his low caste, his earthly parents, his dependence on the gods above him, and his responsibility towards his wife. He attains a certain independence which makes him bold enough to mock the very ideals and ethical codes which, in the *Ammanai*,he is part of and helps to maintain. Kattavarayan exhibits strains of cruelty in the *Katai* which seem to contradict his status as a god and which, together with his arrogance, make him akin to the demons.

C. Kattavarayan's Disguises and Use of Magic

In all three versions Kattavarayan knows the art of magic and of changing his shape. In all three versions again he takes the form of persons of various castes, from the Pariah weaver (*Ammanai*)and the washerman to the king and the Brahman. In the *Ecal* and the *Katai* he also takes the forms of animals: frog (*Ecal*),parrot, fish, etc. (*Katai*).The disguises serve him often to trick someone or to get himself out of difficult situations. For the same purposes Kattavarayan uses his magic. One of the first journeys of Kattavarayan in the *Katai* is to Kerala (famous for its magicians) where he meets Cinnan, the Tottiyan. Kattavarayan takes the disguise of a snake charmer, a profession held

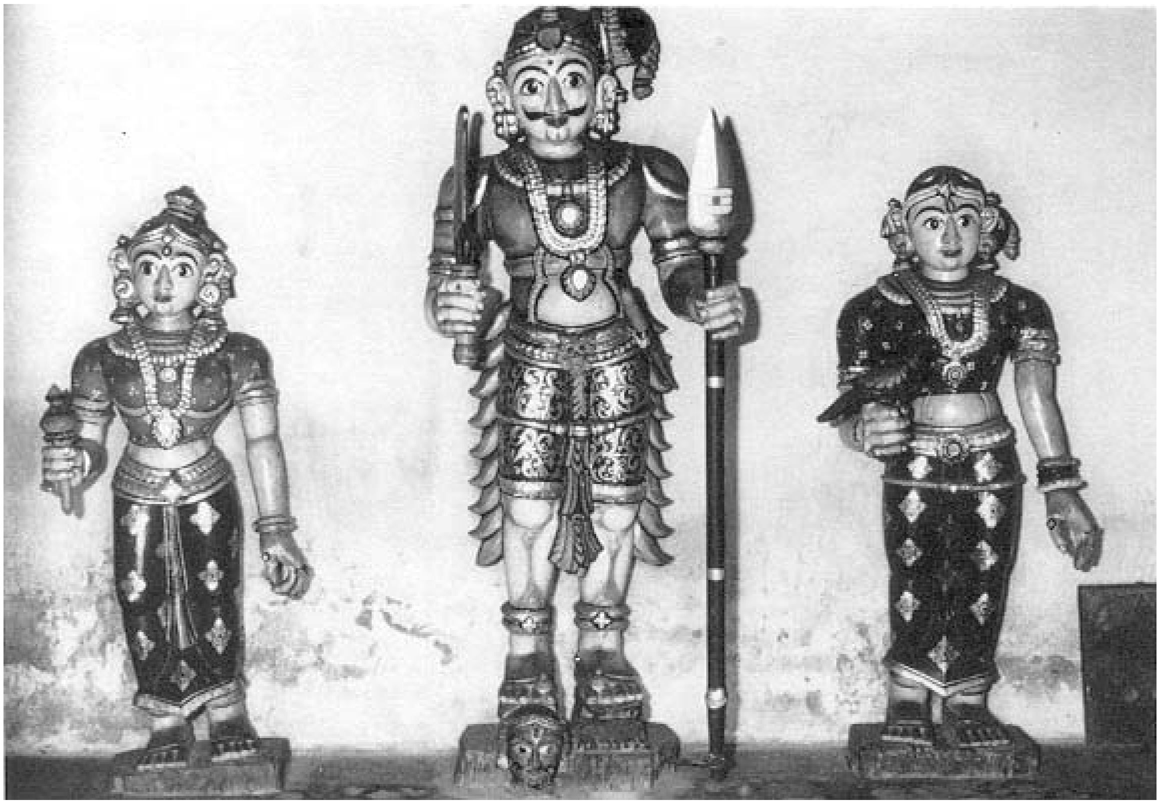
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1. Kattavarayan temple, Vattalai (Komutalaippar). On the right of Kattavarayan is Ariyamalai, on his left is Ontayi. The *kontai* (hair tied into a knot) worn on the left side of the head was a fashion introduced by the Nayaks. Photo by Eveline Masilamani-Meyer.



2. Kamaksi temple, Kuttur. The statues of Kattavarayan, Ariyamalai and Ontayi are new. Facing the offering tray below Kattavarayan is the head of the merchant Vairicetti. The Kamaksi temple and its various shrines were recently renovated. Photo by Eveline Masilamani-Meyer.



3. Kamaksi temple, Vairicettippalaiyam. Kattavarayan, Ariyamalai and Ontayi. Below Kattavarayan's feet is the head of Vairicetti with a Vaisnava *namam* mark. Photo by Eveline Masilamani-Meyer.

by Tottiyans, who were also known to be sorcerers. 27 Perhaps an identification between Kattavarayan and Cinnan is intended here. Kattavarayan agrees to a competition in magic with Cinnan and loses. Cinnan later becomes Kattavarayan's friend and helper, Kattavarayan's own magic abilities thus being supplemented by Cinnan's superior magic power. Yet all this magic is of no use when it comes to the abduction of Ariyamalai. Cinnan refuses in the end to help Kattavarayan, seeing the abduction as a vain endeavor, but Kattavarayan is not perturbed. He praises his own skill and prowess and tells Cinnan more or less to go to hell.

As in Kattavarayan's behaviour with people, we notice a tendency towards evil in his use of magic in the *Katai*.Whereas in the *Ammanai* a negative magic act is usually offset by a positive one (the killing of a person is followed by a revival), in the *Katai* the negative prevails (e.g., the Brahman episodes, or the case of Valli who, together with her daughter, gets tricked several times and killed in the end).

Furthermore, one has to make a distinction between the magic power which all gods possess and the magic powers of the human sorcerer. This distinction is clearly made in the *Ammanai*.To start off with, Kattavarayan exhibits his magic power even before Kali bestows on him her magic sword, mantras, etc. He places a spell on the birds in Kali's abode and he singlehandedly subdues Kali's armies of demons and evil spirits. More important, however, is that Kattavarayan as god (i.e., after his apotheosis) fights against two magicians. Cinnan, the Tottiyan, has bound Mamatura Kali with a spell, and she has to serve him (*eval ceyya*).Kattavarayan challenges Cinnan, and after he has revealed his superior power, cuts off Cinnan's head. Incidentally, this is the only place in the *Ammanai* where we hear of Cinnan. Another sorcerer, Vairicetti, pleads for mercy after Kattavarayan has destroyed his witchcraft (*pilli*).Kattavarayan grants him the boon to become a deity called Cettiperumal and to receive puja in Kamaksi's temple. Vairicetti's shrine is in the compound of the Kamaksi temple. Vairicetti has a *namam* on his forehead to mark his Vaisnava affiliation. Meanwhile, Kattavarayan, who also has a shrine in this temple, is depicted with the same Vairicetti's head under his feet. According to the priest, Kattavarayan beheaded Vairicetti (see plate 3).

In the *Katai*,Kattavarayan learns all his magic while he grows up under the care of the seven maidens. Apart from having

the sorcerer Cinnan as his helper, Kattavarayan makes ample use of his servants, Yama's demons (*putam*),whom he transforms according to his needs and who, more often than not, do "the dirty work" for him. In the

Katai we see in Kattavarayan's use of magic again a shift in values from a higher to a lower order.

D. The Stake (kalu), Sacrifice and Apotheosis

In all three versions Kattavarayan is aware that he cannot escape his fate: to suffer on the stake to atone for his sin (*pavam tira*).We have already mentioned that Kattavarayan's attention is shifted from a wish to become a god (*Ammanai*)to a desire to obtain Ariyamalai (*Katai*).In the *Katai* the scene of the stake is described with much pathos. Kattavarayan, pierced at various parts of his body by nails and hooks, languishes on the stake, while there is great wailing and lamentation among the spectators. 28 On each side and behind Kattavarayan are the three women: Ariyamalai, Ukantalaki and Annamuttu. We must imagine them standing on a platform, as each of the ladies is said to be in a box or nest (kuntu). Even the gods feel pity and Visnu, on behalf of his sister and all the gods, appeals to Siva. If Kamaksi's tears fall on the earth, a great disaster will happen, he tells Siva. Siva gets angry and replies that Kattavarayan is a disobedient child and that he (Siva) will not be moved to pity. It takes some convincing and the sight of his suffering son to make Siva tell Kattavarayan finally to come down from the stake (*irankata*!)and to live. Kattavarayan descends, a great celebration follows, and Kattavarayan goes to live in Tiruccirappalli with his wiveswhether as god or man is left open (he receives a fort and various other earthly goods as dowry).

In the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan mounts the stake alone. He praises his parents (the gods) and blesses all the people. He calls the seven maidens (including Ariyamalai). They come to the bottom of the stake where they leave their bodies (*utal vita*,i.e., die) and join Kattavarayan. Kamaksi bestows on Kattavarayan his form as god (*teyva corupam*).He shall receive the first puja in the sanctum of the Trimurti (*muvaruta cannitiyil mutalppucai yunnatu tan*).29

In the *Ecal* Kattavarayan's suffering is described, but at the same time his being on the stake is said to be his play (*vilaiyatal*).After Kattavarayan has blessed everyone, he dies like a child in a crib.30

The stake or stake tree (kalu, kalumaram) is a 60 foot long square pole of hard wood (ebony or teak). It is not pointed at the top. According to informants, it was not used for impaling peoplewhich would in any case seem impossible at such a heightrather, the person who was to die was placed on a small platform close to the top of the pole and there tied and fastened with hooks. He was then left to die without

food and water. Still today a number of temples own such stakes. They are used during the festival (see below). At the bottom the stake or pole is planted into a platform. Pointing skywards, this stake tree is a powerful symbol of Kattavarayan's deification, his ascension back into the sphere of the gods.

In the *Ammanai* the stake is used by Kattavarayan for yet another purpose. Kattavarayan journeys to Kamaksi's place. There, beyond many forests, in the middle of a flower garden, Kattavarayan does tapas by standing on a copper needle which is on top of a copper pot which in turn is on top of a 60 foot pole (kampam). The purpose of this severe tapas is to get a boon from his parents. Siva, to test Kattavarayan, sends out one of his demons disguised as a Brahman. The Brahman tells Kattavarayan that he also had done tapas on a needle, etc., like Kattavarayan, only he had done it standing on his *head*.Siva and Parvati, however, had not appeared to him, so he had given it up. Why should he (Kattavarayan) persist? He will have no chance at all. "Come down," he advises Kattavarayan. But Kattavarayan persists. The Brahman's taunts do not affect him, his faith cannot be shaken. Kattavarayan then lists a number of people who received boons from Siva.

Kattavarayan not only displays faith, but also a strong will-power and self-assurance bordering on pride. He is prepared to put Siva and Kamaksi to a test: he threatens to cut off his head with Kali's magic sword, unless Siva and Kamaksi grant him the following boons: to abduct Ariyamalai, to mount the stake, to become a god on earth (as guard of the Trimurti), and, in addition, the boon that Siva and Kamaksi will follow him and receive puja. When they refuse him the

last part of the boon (to follow him), he again threatens to cut off his head. Siva and Kamaksi finally have to agree to prevent a sin (*pavam*). 31

In the *Katai* this episode is divided. Just before Kattavarayan mounts the stake (after he has revealed himself to the king and others as godMurukan), he begs Kamaksi again for the boon to abduct Ariyamalai. When his mother refuses, Kattavarayan plants a sword on the ground and threatens to throw himself on it. (Kamaksi never openly agrees, but because Kattavarayan does not commit suicide, we can surmise that he takes her silence to mean a positive answer). When Kattavarayan is on the stake, Siva sends Kuntotaran, in the form of a beetle, to drill through the stake until it falls onto the ground.32 As a reason Siva says: "We have to subdue (bring down) his (Kattavarayan's) arrogance (*matam atakka*)to the point where he cannot bear it anymore." But Cinnan intervenes, ties up Kuntotaran and saves Kattavarayan's glory. The stake in the *Katai* becomes an instrument

of punishment: Kattavarayan does not care if he dies, but he must have Ariyamalai, and it also becomes an instrument to prove Kattavarayan's independence. Siva calls him a disobedient child. Kattavarayan's recalcitrance provokes Siva, but Kattavarayan wins in the end.

Kattavarayan's suffering on the stake is a sacrifice. In the *Katai* the sacrifice is for selfish purposesto gain Ariyamalai; Kattavarayan has already revealed himself as god, and his apotheosis does not depend on his death on the stake. In the *Ammanai* the sacrificea true sacrifice (Kattavarayan dies and is reborn)transcends any selfish reasons: Kattavarayan wishes to become a god. But more than that, by his tapas and sacrifice he has persuaded his parents to follow him. Siva and Kamaksi will therefore be established on earth and accept the offerings of the devotees. In other words, through the inter-mediation of Kattavarayan Siva and Parvati have become directly accessible to the people on earth. The stake then becomes a symbol of sacrifice, rebirth, and transcendence, a means of access to the deities (through tapas); but on a more mundane level it also stands for the established order which forbids intercaste marriage.

E. Kattavarayan as God on Earth

Kattavarayan's birth to Brahman parents turns his sin into a superficial pretext for his true reason on earth: to become a god on *earth*.In the *Katai* Kamaksi shares Kattavarayan's fate. Siva expels her from his left side, from heaven. He curses her to be a demon, an evil spirit, in other words, to become a goddess on earth, dangerous as an evil spirit. It is a characteristic feature of folk deities that they live on earth and are not, like Siva, for example, enthroned permanently in heaven. Although these deities are established on earth, we have to understand that their access to heaven is not barred; on the contrary, they seem to shuttle between these two worlds or live in both worlds, a feat which the avatara concept accommodates. 33 Why this urgency that the deity should be on earth? The deity has to be accessible to his devotee, receive his puja offerings, grant him his wishes. The deity takes possession of the devotee, speaks to or through him, etc. There may be another reason, one which is made explicit in the story of Ankalamman: Siva curses this goddess to live on earth *and* to enjoy the fruits of all the offences or sins (pavam) committed by humans.34 Here, then, the deity's karman is clearly linked with that of the devotees. The deity has to interact with the worshippers and thereby becomes tainted or polluted. The sins or pollutions with which the deity (on

earth) is charged are again removed by the deity's own suffering. This suffering can take the form of a death and rebirth or the form of severe tapas. 35

The same idea that deity and devotee are not independent units but part of a larger system which places them in relation to each other is also expressed in the story of Kattavarayan. In the *Katai* Kamaksi's presence on earth can only be terminated when her son has fulfilled his fate, has mounted the stake, and we have seen that in the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan forces his parents to accord him his wish by threatening to cut off his headan act by which he would charge them with guilt (*pali pota*)and cause a sin.

Surely the purpose behind a marriage between a Pariah and a Brahman has a much deeper meaning than simply anti-

caste sentiments. The marriage between a Pariah male and a Brahman female is the greatest transgression against caste rules. Offspring from such a union are classed among the lowest beings. The very gravity of the offense (compare Siva's Brahmanicide) places Kattavarayan amongst the most despicable of men and makes him a criminal deserving a cruel death. But Kattavarayan, being born to Brahman parents, is in fact innocent, and his suffering at the stake becomes a sacrifice rather than a punishment. In other words, if Kattavarayan has to be born on earth as a god, he first has to die, and his death has to be *violent*.It is well-known that humans who die a violent, sudden, often unjust death, are later deified.36 Siva's curse, which involves the Pariah Kattavarayan with a Brahman woman, could therefore be a pretext to subject Kattavarayan to a violent death, to make him the innocent sacrificial victim. Still, the violence of Kattavarayan's death alone does not seem a satisfactory answer for the Pariah-Brahman marriage, a theme which underlies a number of myths or tales.37

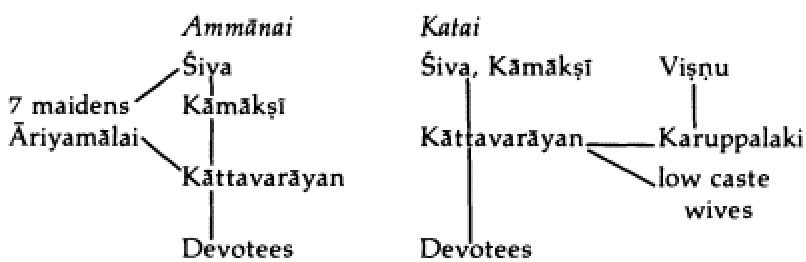
The marriage of a Pariah god with a Brahman woman or of a Brahman goddess with a Pariah man, a god's double parentage (one set of parents being of high caste, the other of low caste, e.g., Kattavarayan, Maturai Viran), and the theme of the split body (e.g., the story of Renuka) seem to be various expressions of the paradox that the deity in question is both a Pariah and a Brahman. A similar statement is perhaps made when a god is given two wives (one of high and one of low caste) or when a goddess has two lovers-husbands, one being a demon, the other Siva.38 The god on earth has to be both transcendent, free, beyond duality and conflict, untouched by creation and destruction, birth and death, and at the same time be immanent, undergoing birth and death himself. This double aspect makes the

god a perfect mediator between the devotee, caught in the world of conflict, on the one hand, and the transcendent on the other.

Renuka's story is very apt. She is one of Brahma's daughters and wife of a sage. 39 When she realizes that she has the body of an Untouchable, she does not return to her husband (probably in heaven) but remains as Mariyamman on earth, where she brings disease and death but also cures and rebirth.40 Although she is involved in the violence and impure activities on earth, a part of her, symbolized by her Brahman head, remains in the realm of the transcendent, the pure. The head, we could say then, connects the goddess with the world of Siva, whereas the rest of her body links her with the devotees on earth.

Although the deity (on earth) is both caught in the world of conflict and beyond it, we have to see him or her as part of a hierarchic system. Depending on the deity's place in the hierarchy, he or she is closer or further removed from the transcendent plane. In other words, the wholly transcendent (deity) is immanent in all, but not affected by anything, whereas the least transcendent (deity) is the most involved in and affected by the conflict.

Throughout the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan keeps repeating his life story. He states that he is born to Brahman parents, found by a Pariah and brought up by Ceppilaiyan. The listener then is constantly aware of Kattavarayan's parentage. In the *Katai*,as we have already mentioned, our hero prefers to identify himself simply as a son of Siva. Seen in the light of what we have said earlier, we could perhaps interpret Kattavarayan's marriage to at least two low caste women in the *Katai* as a compensation for his disregard of his low parentage. We could further explain Kattavarayan's change of character in the *Katai* as an attempt to take him (the god) out of the social and divine hierarchy (of the *Ammanai*)and then to place him back into it, but a step higher, closer to Siva, as is shown in the following diagram:



In the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan retains a close relationship with Kamaksi. He establishes temples for her and stays with her, receiving meat and liquor offerings from the devotees. As her "impure" guard, Kattavarayan holds a mediating position between her and the devotees. Kamaksi, in turn, stands in a mediating position between Kattavarayan and Siva. In the *Katai* Siva and Kamaksi return to heaven. Kattavarayan remains on earth alone, with his wives. In the *Katai* Kattavarayan has already been moved up to a level where he transcends opposites. He has lost, so to speak, his Pariah body. He can make fun of the Brahmans because he is a Super-Brahman, above caste hierarchy. But Kattavarayan has to remain on earth, and to compensate for the loss of his low caste body, he marries not Ariyamalai, but two women of low caste. At the same time, however, he secures his place in the hierarchy of the gods by marrying Karuppalaki, Visnu's daughter, thus compensating for the loss of his relationship with Ariyamalai.

F. The Changing Face of Kattavarayan

Before we try to assess what could have brought about the change in Kattavarayan's face, let us list the main characteristics of our hero in the *Ammanai* and the *Katai*.

The *Ammanai* portrays Kattavarayan as a model hero: he fights heroic battles, he subdues dangerous (evil) enemies, he shows prowess, strength of willpower. He has devotion towards his divine parents and respect for his earthly parents and the king. He moves in and out of various castes (by means of his disguises and through his connection with the seven maidens). 41 Although some resentment towards Brahmans (as made explicit by Kattavarayan's mockery of them) cannot de denied in this version, it is of small importance to the whole story. In the *Ammanai*,on the whole, Kattavarayan shows himself as a god who favors all castes and whom all castes should or may accept. In the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan is a god, but he is also human (much more so than in the *Katai*).His humanness, his admission that he is a "fallen" god, a god who has to atone for his sin by being born on earth and whose fate it is to sin again, facilitates his devotees' identification with him.

Kattavarayan, as depicted in the *Katai*,mocks the social order (Brahman, king, low caste) and the divine hierarchy (e.g., when he makes his father, Siva, a washerman, or when, as a dancing girl, he causes Visnu to fall in love with him). He is a criminal (kills women), is filled with pride, is at times cowardly and mean and at other times

brave and compassionate. He identifies himself with Visnu (as Rankarthe colored one), and he claims as his true form that of Murukan. His main preoccupation is with women, but he also derides his own erotic leanings (his favorite form is that of a decrepit old man, and as such he once pleads with Cinnan, holding his own nose, to take him away quickly from the dangerous smell of women). Although Kattavarayan worships his mother Kamaksi faithfully every time he visits her to nag her about Ariyamalai, he is no model devotee, nor can his behaviour be a model *for* the devotees.

Kattavarayan's change from the innocent victim who is sacrificed at the stake to become a god on earth, accessible to his devotees (*Ammanai*),to an arrogant and sometimes mean prankster who turns the social conventions upside-down, cannot easily be explained.

Does the *Katai* reflect a decay of the social order and belief system, and is it possible that the *Katai*,by making the listener aware of the confusion, exhorts him to set things right? Kattavarayan's frustration at not receiving Kamaksi's permission to abduct Ariyamalai ("Mother, how many times do I have to ask you for this boon?") was greatly exaggerated by the professional singers of the story. 42 Have the gods become indifferent to our needs, are they just playing with us instead of helping us? Even in the *Ammanai* Kattavarayan voices his discontent when he asks why he should feel guilty for something the gods indulge in as well ("Did not Krsna steal the clothes of the *gopis*,"etc.).43

If the story of Kattavarayan is to instill in the listener any noble sentiments and cause him to reflect on the eternal problem of life and death, the *Ammanai* seems more appropriate an instrument than the *Katai*.The *Ammanai* and the *Ecal* are meant to be sung at the time of the festival. Those singers who themselves are devotees of Kattavarayan generally know the story as it is narrated in the *Ammanai* or the *Ecal*.44As opposed to the *Katai*,the *Ammanai* is marked by a seriousness of tone. Its narrative is cohesive and clear. The *Katai* differs from the *Ammanai* not only in its comic scenes. It exhibits inconsistencies and it is replete with repetitions and often unnecessary details. We also see a greater use of erotic and stereotype imagery.45 These signs point to the itinerant professional singer whose foremost interest it is to prolong his performance and to entertain his audience; a singer whose main concern is not to evoke feelings of devotion

in the audience, but to enchant the listeners. The *Katai* sometimes reads like a scenario for a Tamil film, and it is not surprising that the Tamil film "Kattavarayan" is based on the story of the *Katai*.

Kattavarayan's change of character can be seen in relation to an

increase of his popularity and a spread of his cult. There is a trend in the *Katai* to take Kattavarayan out of his parochial surroundings and to assimilate him or bring him into relation with more popular and known characters. Giants or Asuras of various names with whom Kattavarayan fights in the *Ammanai*,Periyannacami, and the magician Vairicetti are some of the figures who disappear in the *Katai*.Instead, Visnu and Murukan enter the picture. 46

The *Katai* disengages Kattavarayan from the limited geography of his cultic centres and transposes him into a more mythological realm. In the *Katai* Kattavarayan gains a certain independence, and this process is connected with a shift of values. Devotion and surrender (*Ammanai*)yield to self-confidence and detachment. Mockery, parody,47 imagination, but also a certain clumsy rudeness are the means by which Kattavarayan hopes to appeal to the masses and propagate his fame. Kattavarayan's spread beyond the Tiruccirappalli district proves that he was not entirely unsuccessful, but his position in the temple hierarchy shows that he has not been able to escape his role as guard and child of his much greater mother.

G. Kattavarayan in the Cult

We can only touch shortly upon the cult of Kattavarayan.48 The story of Kattavarayan takes place in a relatively small area stretching from Tiruccirappalli in a northern direction up to the two hilly ranges called Kollimalai (on the Namakkal side) and Paccaimalai (on the Perampalur side). Puttur (Ariyamalai's birth place) and Paccur (where Kattavarayan mounts the stake) are both close to Nocciyam which lies on the road following the Kaveri westwards leading from Tiruccirappalli to Amur. Komutalaippar (i.e., Vattalaiwhere Kattavarayan settles Ariyamalai) lies on the same road approximately ten kilometers west of Nocciyam. Vairicettippalaiyam (from where Kattavarayan abducts the Cetti girl Ontayi to bring her to Ariyamalai) lies at the eastern foot of the Kolli hills.

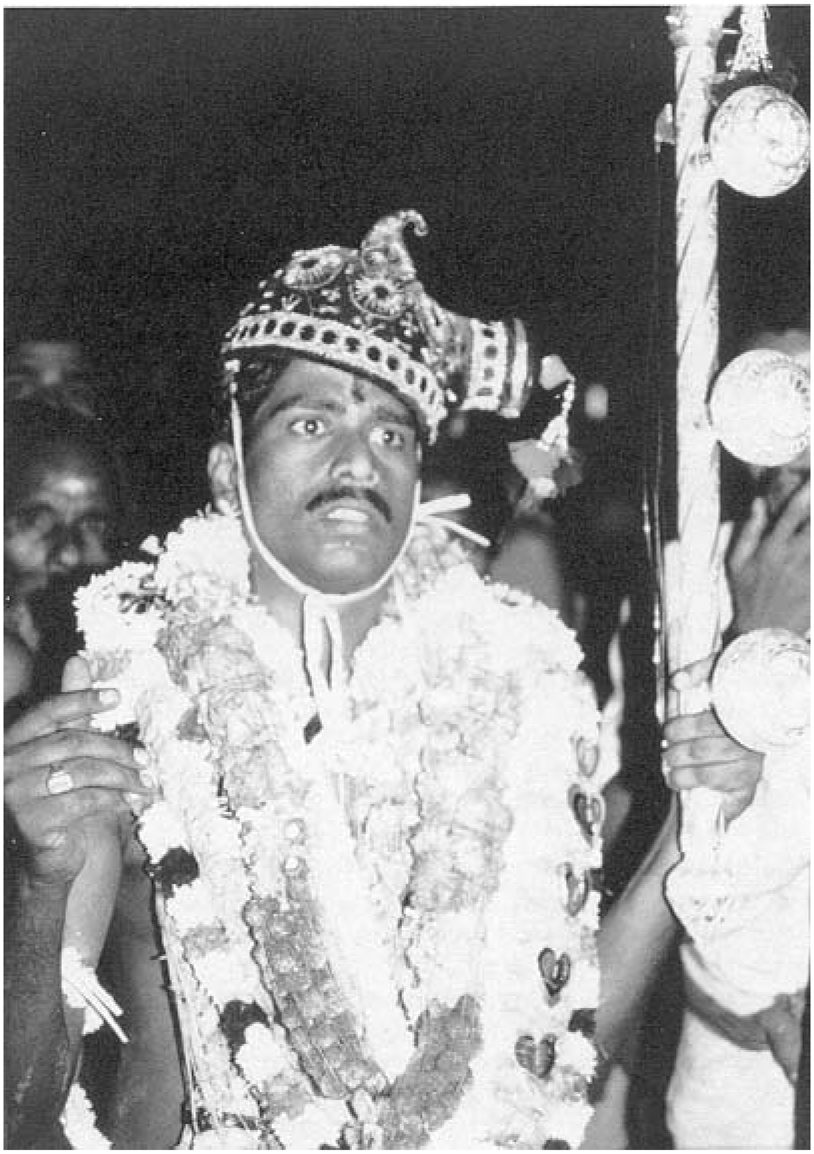
With the exception of the temple in Vattalai, I have not come across a temple dedicated to Kattavarayan alone. Usually he is a sub-deity (*parivaratevatai*)in a goddess temple: in the Tiruccirappalli area mainly in temples for Kamaksi, in Tañcavur and west thereof in Mariyamman temples. In the South Arcot district we find Kattavarayan also in Ankalamman temples. The temple in Vattalai was recently constructed. It faces a mandapa at the tip of a small peninsula jutting

into the Aiyaru (a branch of the Kaveri). The mandapa marks the place where Kattavarayan brought Ariyamalai (i.e., Komutalaippar). 49 The original Kattavarayan temple in Vattalai, established 93 years ago, no longer exists.50 There is now a separate temple to Kattavarayan and another temple in which we find Cinnan, Vinayakar, Kamaksi, Periyannacami, Ariyamalai, Kattavarayan, Ontayi, and Maturai Viran. This is the only temple in which I have seen Cinnan. Apart from Kattavarayan, one often finds in Kamaksi temples the following *parivara* deities: Maci Periyannacami,51 Maturai Viran, Cenkamamuni (an Asura Kattavarayan fights on his way to Kamaksi's place*Ammanai*),Vairavar (Bhairava), and some form of Karuppan. Kattavarayan is usually depicted with a kinnaram in his hand. Ariyamalai and Ontayi stand on each side of him.

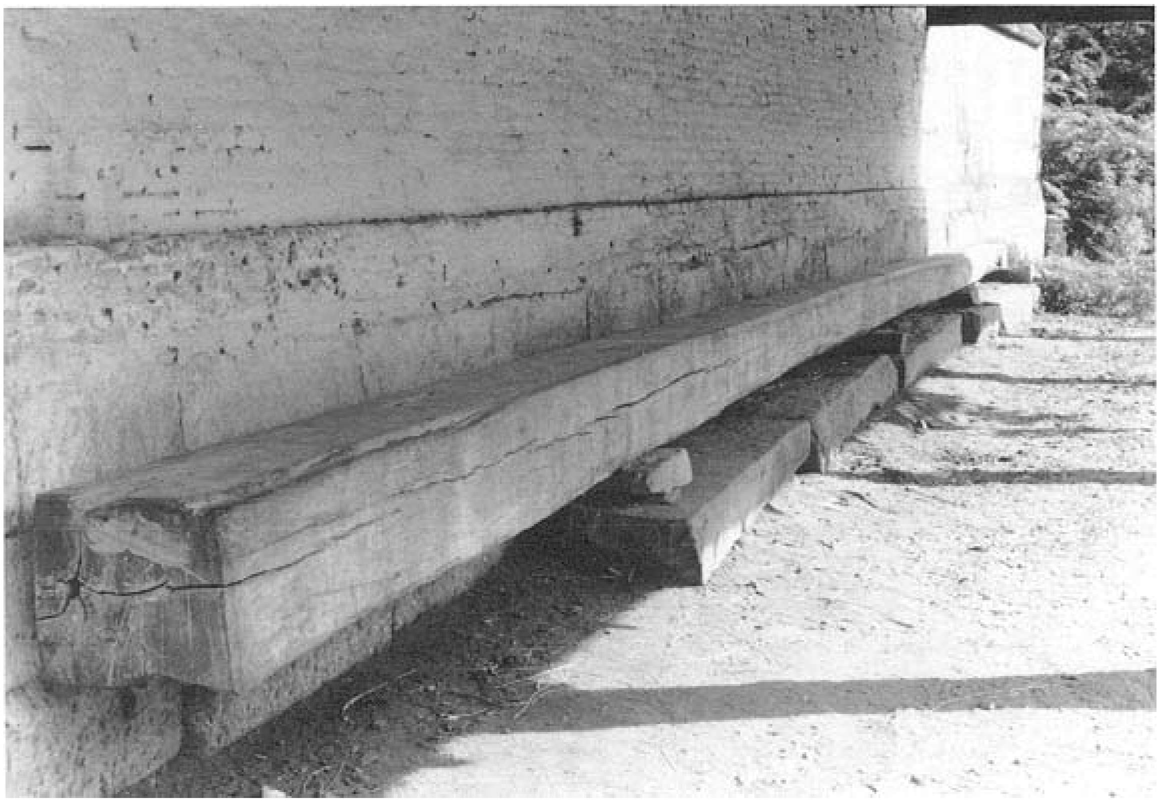
How old is the cult of Kattavarayan? Kamaksi was worshipped in Kuttur as far back as 1310. This temple was established by Coliya Velalars, and a branch of the same family erected the temple in Vairicettippalaiyam. Both temples contain Kattavarayan and both temples are mentioned in the *Ammanai*.Most temple priests and singers of the story I spoke to thought that the events of Kattavarayan took place around 600 years ago.52

The two main castes who worship Kattavarayan as *kulateyvam* in the Tiruccirappalli area are the Velalar and Muttiraja. They are also the priests in the Kamaksi temples. Many families still celebrate the main festival for Kattavarayan, called "mounting the stake" (*kaluverral*).In Paccur the festival took place in 1986 (in the month of Pankuni)53 after a lapse of

20 years, a lapse due to family quarrels. A person of the family (they are Saiva Velalars) dresses up as Kattavarayan (see plate 4). He comes first to the Kamaksi temple, which lies in the middle of the fields. There Kattavarayan is tied with flower ropes and then brought to nearby Paccur, where he mounts the stake (see plate 5)a 60 foot pole on top of which a small square hut has been set up (brightly lit with neon lamps). There Kattavarayan sits in a state of minor (?) possession.54 One man, representing Nallatankal, brings buttermilk up to Kattavarayan. An Acari (Smith) climbs up with a hook. He does not insert the hook in Kattavarayan's neck. (It used to be the practice to insert a golden hook in the person's neck). Towards dawn Kattavarayan descends the stake again and throws flower garlands as *prasada* into the crowd. Some singers were present at this festival, but only very small portions of the story were sung. Obviously the festival has been curtailed to a large extent. Informants say that



4. Paccur. Mr. M. Katirvel dressed as Kattavarayan before ascending the "stake" at the Kaluverral festival in 1986. In his left hand he holds a silver kinnaram. Photo by Rollo Masilamani.



5. Paccur. The kalumaram stored alongside the house of the Saiva Velalar family. The actor impersonating Kattavarayan has to ascend this 60 foot high "stake" during the festival. Photo by Eveline Masilamani-Meyer.

walking on sandals studded with nails used to be a feature of the festival. Furthermore, Kattavarayan used to be bound with heavy chains (see plate 6).

The ceremony performed for Kattavarayan in the Nellukkatai Mariyamman temple of Nakappattinam is still called *cetil utsavam* (hook-*utsava*),but instead of hooking Kattavarayan up on his back and raising him in the air, he stands in a square frame, which is pulled up and swirled around. The idea that the kalu, however, is a symbol for rebirth is still being transmitted. Every time Kattavarayan makes one round in the air, he hold a child in his arms. The parents believe that this will guarantee a long and healthy life to the child. It is also on this day that sick people are brought to the temple on a bier (like dead bodies) and "revived" by the goddes Mariyamman.

Traditionally the kaluverral is the only festival celebrated for Kattavarayan. Since recently, however, a wedding festival for Kattavarayan takes place in Vattalai also. There, as in a number of other temples, the kaluverral is also celebrated, despite the protest of some devotees who believe that it should only take place in Paccur. What is truly unfortunate is the fact that the Kattavarayan story is no longer sung during the festival. The reason can partly be ascribed to the triumph of cinema songs and loudspeakers, but mainly to the great expenditure involved in the festival. Nowadays a kaluverral festival lasts from one to three days, as opposed to the twelve or more days it would take to recite the *Ammanai*.The result is that the old professional singers use their palm leaf manuscripts as fire wood to cook their meagre portions of rice.

Notes

1. The research on Kattavarayan and my work on a translation of the *Kattavarayacuvami Katai* has been made possible by a senior research fellowship from Tamil University, Tañcavur. I am very grateful to the Tamil University for having given me the opportunity to work on such a project. I also thank Dr. S. Rajaram, Tamil University, for his help in the translation of the *Katai*.An earlier draft of this paper was read by A. Hiltebeitel and S. Visuvalingam. I wish to thank

both of them for their valuable comments.

2. "Stake," Tamil kalu. Although the stake has the connotation of an impaling stake, the kalu here is not used for impalement; see below.

3. The *Ammanai* consists of approximately 500 *olas*.It is in possession of Mr. Ramu Pantaram and was made available to me through Mr. Subrahmaniya Vattiyar of Vayalur, to whom I am very grateful for his help. I also thank



6. Kamaksi temple, Koppu. Chains and handcuffs with which Kattavarayan's impersonator used to be tied during the festival. Walking on sandals studded with nails was practised by the priest of this village up to two generations ago. Photo by Eveline Masilamani-Meyer.

Mr. G. Jothi and Mr. V. Bharathi for copying the palm leaf manuscript. To Mr. Jothi I am also grateful for accompanying me on my field trips in the Tiruccirappalli area.

4. Copied from a palm leaf manscript in possession of Dr. M. Masilamani, teacher, Ayilappettai, Koppu. I am grateful to Dr. Masilamani for letting me make a xerox copy of the *Ecal*.Large parts of this version can be found in *Kattavarayan Kataippatal*,edited by Na. Vanamamalai, Maturai Palkalaikkalakam, 1971.

5. David Shulman's article in this volume is based mainly on this version. His insightful analysis of the text anticipates some of my own conclusions, and a number of points he makes can be supported by my comparison of the texts.

6. *Nantavanam*,a garden with flowers meant to be used for worship. For a more detailed description of the content of the *Katai*,see Shulman in this volume. The ant story is also made the reason for which Ankalamman has to become involved with human beings. See Eveline Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*: *A Goddess of Tamilnadu*, *Her Myths and Cult* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1986), 9 ff., 66.

7. When Kattavarayan is disguised as a snake charmer (*joki*)he says: "I am the son of Ekamparajoki." Disguised as a washerman he calls himself Kattavannan, son of Ekamparavannan.

8. She gets irritated to the point where she simply burns Komutalaippar (see n. 21), to which Kattavarayan had brought Ukantalaki with her permission.

9. She is truly old. Her age is the reason she cites for her inability to raise her child, Kattavarayan, and for handing him over to the seven maidens who become his foster mothers.

10. In the *Katai* Kattavarayan kills the birds in Kamaksi's abode and thus gets her attention.

11. *Kinnaram*,a kind of *vinai* consisting of three to five gourds, attached to a bridge with three strings.

12. In the *Katai* Kattavarayan receives the latter from the seven maidens, his foster mothers.

13. Macimalai belongs to the Kollimalai mountain range. Kali's abode (*kalivanam*),although in the Kolli Hills, is not located on Macimalai. The tree is either ebony (*acca*)or teak (*tekku*).

14. Mudevi is the elder sister of Laksmi and is generally a goddess of ill luck.

15. More exactly, as a Brahman versed in the pañcankam (an almanac embracing lunar days or phases of the moon, solar days or weeks, periods of the asterisms, the *yokams* and *karanas*).

16. Ariyamalai's servants, instead of delivering Kattavarayan's love letter to their mistress, read and burn it. For this treachery they are blinded (!), and on their way they fall into a pit filled with cowdung and water prepared by Cinnan at Kattavarayan's instigation. They receive their eyesight back, but are then punished by Ariyamalai, who hears of their treachery through Katta-

varayan's song. Ariyamalai makes them shave their heads, place red and black dots on their faces and ride on donkeys. To be driven through the village on an ass was a punishment meted out to adulterers. See Edgar Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1975), 45.

17. In the chapter "Vetiyarkalai acarankulaitta vanam."

18. Kurukkalan officiating Brahman priest in Siva temples.

19. According to Mr. Subrahmaniya Vattiyar, Valayur, the ribald parts of the Kattavarayan story were first introduced in the Tiruccirappalli area some twenty years ago, in Uraiyur.

20. Information from Mr. R. Kacinatan, Nakalur, who sang the whole story on tape for me. He followed fairly closely the *Katai* version. When I asked him about these Brahman episodes, he sang one, a rather delightful one, which is not in the *Katai*:Kattavarayan (disguised, of course) sells fish powder to the Brahman ladies, telling them that it is some spice and that they should cook it with the rice, but be sure not to uncover the pot before the rice is ready to be eaten. When the Brahman men eat this meal, they praise it as the best meal they have eaten in their thirty years of married life.

21. Komutalaippar"riverbank of the big crocodiles." See below, part G.

22. Anavamone of the *mala* (stains) in Saiva Siddhanta.

23. After a big puja to the gods, the lord of Sriranka, Visnu, turns the youngest of the maidens into a lime, which he gives to the Brahman woman, Annatulaci, to eat. She becomes pregnant and gives birth to Ariyamalai. We have seen above that Kattavarayan's birth happened the same way. The lime has a variety of ritual significances, one of them being fertility. Priests will give sacred limes to women who wish to get pregnant.

24. For a short synopsis of her story see Stuart H. Blackburn, "Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism," *History of Religions*,24 (1985), 260.

25. She is said to be wife (*tevi*)of seven Karuppan.

26. We find this pattern also in Maharashtra, where Khandoba's second wife, Banai, is of tribal origin. See Günther D. Sontheimer, *Biroba, Mhaskoba und Khandoba: Ursprung, Geschichte und Umwelt von Pastoralen Gottheiten in Maharastra* (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1976), 21, 61ff, and Sontheimer and Stanley in this volume.

27. See Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras: Government Press, 1909), 186, 196-97.

28. It is difficult to determine exactly how the punishment was administered. According to the *Katai*,Kattavarayan was hanging on a hook and nails pierced his body.

29. The reference that Kattavarayan will be a guard or soldier (*cevakan*)for the Trimurti (Mummurtiyar) occurs several times. No further explanation is offered.

30. According to Dr. V. Venugopal, Maturai Kamaraj University, the pun-

ishment was to place the criminal into a basket or box and hang him thus on top of a large pole for several days.

31. Perhaps we can see in Kattavarayan's tapas on top of the pole a correspondence to Arjuna's tapas in the Draupadi cult. Arjuna performs his tapas on top of a high pole in order to get the *pasupata* weapon from Siva. Information from A. Hiltebeitel.

32. As the Brahman doing tapas standing on his head in the *Ammanai*,the image of the beetle here also suggests a mockery of Kattavarayan's tapasthe small beetle causing the stake to fall on which Kattavarayan is heroically dying.

33. See Brenda E. F. Beck, "The Goddess and the Demon, a Local South Indian Festival and its Wider Context," in Madeleine Biardeau, ed., *Autour de la déesse hindoue, Purusartha 5* (1981), 92, and Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*,48 ff.

34. Meyer, *op. cit.*,11.

35. We see this clearly in the cult of Ankalamman where the goddess becomes once a year the sacrificial victim (see Meyer, *op. cit.*,105 ff.), and in the cult of Kattavarayan where once a year Kattavarayan has to mount the stake. Kamaksi and Ankalamman are engaged in tapas while they are on earth.

36. See Blackburn who discusses this aspect in his "Death and Deification" (n. 24).

37. See Beck, "The Goddess and the Demon," 95, 96, and Blackburn, "Death and Deification," 261. The story of Natan Cami, cited by Blackburn, is especially relevant because it contains a number of parallels to the Kattavarayan story. Like Kattavarayan, Natan Cami possesses magical powers.

38. See Beck, "The Goddess and the Demon," 83 ff. A Brahman-Pariah combination in the god could be folk religion's answer to what Heesterman calls the "insoluble dilemma" of Hindu tradition, the incompatibility of the "turbulent order of conflict and the static order of transcendence." J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition, Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 2, 7, 9.

39. See Beck, "The Goddess and the Demon," 126.

40. See Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*,16, 17.

41. The castes are: merchants, washermen, spinners, weavers, carpenters, smiths, shepherds and Brahmans.

42. Mr. R. Kacinatan, Nakalur and Mr. S. Nakarajan, Varuttiyur. See note 20.

43. "Did not Siva hide a girl on his head? Did Indra's body not become covered with *yonis* because of his desire for Ahalya? Did not Kovalan's whole tragedy happen because he fell in love with (another) woman?"

44. In the Tiruccirappalli area almost all families connected with Kattavarayan are in possession of a shorter or longer version of the Kattavarayan story (written on palm leaves).

45. Here are a few examples. Unnecessary details: the enumeration of all

the fishes which the king creates along with a river and parks for Ariyamalai; the list of jewelry with which he adorns her. Erotics: In the section *Vannaravalli Vanam*,Kattavarayan draws a picture of Ariyamalai on her sari. He begins at her head, and when he draws her thighs he simply faints. When Ariyamalai sees the drawing, she is surprised to find a mole drawn on one thigh. Inspecting her thighs, she discovers the mole. Stereotypes: Places or fortresses so high that no fly can enter; numbers: 7, 10, 21 (walls or fortifications); women who walk like swans; old man aged 90 and 10, aged 400 and 10 (for the last, compare Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*,27, 28).

46. With these enter also some obscure persons such as Annamuttu and Ammaiyappan, A Velalar boy without arms and legs, rescued by Kattavarayan, healed by Kamaksi and given the task to guard Kamaksi during her tapas.

47. Kattavarayan's mocking comment on Ariyamalai's ghee-soaked rice meals (*Katai*)parodies his devout offering of fruits to Ariyamalai in the *Ammanai*.Kattavarayan's command over and frequent use of Yama's demons (*Katai*)is a caricature of Siva's use of *his* demon in the *Ammanai*.Kattavarayan's humiliation of Kamaksi (when he has her beaten up) makes a mockery of his devotion in the *Ammanai*.

48. I hope to be doing a detailed study of Kattavarayan's cult in the near future.

49. There used to beand according to some people there still arecrocodiles in the river.

50. It was established by Mr. Parimanam Mutturaja, munsif of Koppu. He was the grandfather of Dr. Masilamani's wife; see note 4.

51. He is an interesting god who deserves a full study. He lives on Macimalai (Kolli hills), rides a tiger, receives animal sacrifices, and is identified with Visnu.

52. At present I cannot say how far back the cult actually goes, but I hope that my further research on Kattavarayan will furnish such answers.

53. March-April, 1986.

54. Because a person in possession often loses control over his body, it would seem quite dangerous for "Kattavarayan" to be possessed while sitting on the 60 foot pole.

4
Tricking the Goddess: Cowherd Katamaraju and Goddess Ganga in the Telugu Folk Epic

Velcheru Narayana Rao

The Gollas, a cowherding community of Andhra Pradesh, sing a long narrative with many lays, generally known as *Katamaraju Katha*.During my field work in Andhra Pradesh in 1986, 1 I collected two versions of this epic, sung respectively by Golla and Madiga singers.2 One version of this narrative, edited from a number of palm leaf manuscripts, is published by Tangirala Venkata Subba Rao.3 In this paper I focus on the main hero of the epic, Katamaraju, and his relationship with goddess Ganga. Later in the paper I suggest connections between the nature of their hero, Katamaraju, their deity Ganga, and the Golla caste self-image. First, a summary of the narrative of Katamaraju and Ganga's first meeting.4

A. Tricking the Goddess

Katamaraju is the third-generation hero of this epic story. His father Peddiraju dies in a battle with Valiketuvaraju. Katamaraju, a seven-year old boy at that time, goes to the battlefield to get his father's dead body. The battlefield is being protected by goddess Ganga and her brother Poturaju. Ganga sends Poturaju to check on who is invading her territory. Poturaju asks her why he should have to watch over dead bodies: "If I take care of a village or a city, at least I will have

food." Ganga says that as long as the Gollas have salt and water, she will see to it that they give Poturaju a sheep (or goat: *potu*)tall as a palm tree and rice as high as a mountain. Poturaju then appears before Katamaraju in his fierce form. He stops Katamaraju and wants to know who he is and why he has entered the battlefield without fear in the dead of night. Katamaraju, supported by Somesvara (Siva), stands bravely and answers him. He lifts his sword and attempts to cut off Poturaju's head for his insolence in questioning him. Poturaju loses courage and runs back to his sister crying for help. All the Bhutas (spirits) in Poturaju's army run away in fear. Ganga consoles Poturaju and prepares herself to meet with Katamaraju. She creates an illusion around her and grows to be as tall as the sky. She projects twelve spears out of her head and impales an elephant on each spear. Over the elephants she stacks twelve corpses. She has twelve lamps for each corpse. She holds weapons in all her twelve hands. With jingling bells on her feet and burning coals on her head, a *kinnera*,a stringed instrument, on her shoulder, she comes making huge strides. She yells like thunder. Fire rises from the sky and sparks of fire fall on the earth. Biting her teeth fiercely, standing tall like a palm tree, she rains burning coals on the earth. Katamaraju sees her and quickly pulls his sword. Somesvara pats Katamaraju on the back and advises him that the deity is Katamaraju's family deity and that he should speak to her with courage. Katamaraju speaks fiercely, brandishing his sword. He says, "Do not come near, demon, I will break you into six pieces with one stroke." Ganga puffs her cheeks, rains more fire and asks him, "Who are you, human, why do you have to come at this hour to the battlefield?" Katamaraju is furious for being asked this and insists on knowing who she is. Ganga warns him that even gods, including Indra, fear to enter the battlefield at that time of night. She demands that Katamaraju identify himself. Katamaraju defies her. Amazed at the boy's defiance and not knowing what to do to coerce him to obey her she softens her attitude towards him and says, "Don't you know who I am? Why don't you tell me your name, Blue-colored One?"

Addressing Katamaraju with this name shifts his identity to a Krsna image and introduces erotic connotations into the encounter. Now Ganga starts playing word-games and says that her name is Gourd with Tangles. Katamaraju answers this riddle-like identification with a similar riddle: his name is The Sharp Sickle Which Cuts the Tangled Gourd. Ganga then says her name is The Lightning From a Frightening Cloud. Katamaraju retorts that his name is Thunderbolt from the Lightning. The riddling continues. Ganga says her name is The Fate

of Time. Katamaraju says his name is Lord of Time. Ganga says her name is Bride of Battle. Katamaraju says, if that is so, he is Bridegroom of Battle who would step on her foot and tie the marriage band.

Not having succeeded in the verbal encounter either, Ganga changes her posture. The marriage relationship hinted in the last exchange suggests further possibilities. She identifies herself as the deity of the Gollas, the primal power sitting on Siva's head. Satisfied with this straightforward answer Katamaraju identifies himself; he is the grandson of Valuraju and the son of Peddiraju, and his name is Katamaraju. Ganga giggles and appears before him as young girl of twelve. She offers him protection. She was the one who saved the corpses from rotting, and guarded the battlefield so that even a male bee did not enter. As soon as he identified himself, she saved Katamaraju from destruction. "Therefore," says Ganga, "lift your hands and bow to me, the deity of your family." Katamaraju refuses to bow and says, "I am seven years old, and have never learned to bow to any one yet." Ganga laughs at him and to teach him how to bow, she lifts both of her hands and says, "This is how you bow." Katamaraju laughs victoriously and says, "Ganga bowed to me first and I bowed in return."

Insulted by Katamaraju's trick, Ganga says that if he is that smart, they should marry each other. Marriage is the means through which the deity desires to subdue Katamaraju. Katamaraju is angry at her words. He is grieving over his father's death. It is not right to ask him to marry her at that time. Ganga asks for food in return for her services of watching the battlefield. She asks for a sheep as tall as a palm and a heap of rice as high as a mountain. This she wants as long as time lasts and the Sun, Moon, and the stars endure. Although this food is also for her, she asks for it because she had already

promised to get it for Poturaju.

Katamaraju asks in turn that Ganga show him his father's corpse and make it come to life and talk to him. She should help him avenge his father's death. If she does this, he will give her animal sacrifices and even human sacrifices. Also, if she is born in a particular family, that of the Marlas, he will marry her, too. Ganga is not sure Katamaraju will keep his word and asks him, "Can I trust your word?" Katamaraju assures her that she can. Ganga is pleased.

But Ganga's relationship with Katamaraju does not go well even after this promise. Apparently Katamaraju is not eager to keep his promise. When Katamaraju intends to go with his huge herd to the south, where grass is plentiful for his herd to feed on, Ganga appears again. She stops his herd from moving further. She makes the Paleru,

a river in Nellore area where Katamaraju's herd is resting, rise in flood. The cows are unable to cross the river. Katamaraju is angered at Ganga's action. He refuses to feed her and worship her. She insists that he do so, or she will not let the cows go any further. She sprinkles magical rice on the cows and the cows get confused and scatter. Katamaraju still refuses to worship her. He will not bow to a female deity. Ganga vows to make Katamaraju worship her. Katamaraju says that only women worship a female deity but men do not. He accuses her of playing games like a harlot. Ganga reminds Katamaraju of the incident at the battlefield, the incident which happened when Katamaraju was a seven-year old. Katamaraju has made a promise to feed her. Has he forgotten that promise? Does he have no honor? A long argument ensues and Ganga brags about her superior powers and her association with Katamaraju's family and clan. Poluraju, Katamaraju's uncle, appears in Katamaraju's dream and advises him to worship Ganga. Katamaraju finally agrees. Receiving her proper worship, Ganga blesses Katamaraju to move safely to the south and take revenge against the enemy kings.

The story of the strained relationship between Ganga and Katamaraju does not end here. Ganga is born into the Marla family and asks her family members to arrange for her marriage with Katamaraju. Katamaraju has been preparing for his final battle with his enemies. Relatives on the bride's side and the bridegroom's side arrange for the wedding. Katamaraju recalls his argument with the deity Ganga in the battlefield. He is unhappy that the women of his family are getting ready for his marriage with Ganga. This ruins the success he has had in the battlefield when he fought with Poturaju and won his argument with Ganga. But he does not say anything against the women. He thinks that there must be a deeper reason for the events to happen this way and he quietly agrees to the marriage. Just as Katamaraju is ready to pour the sacred rice on her head (a ritual event constituting the principal act of marriage), 5 the bride of the Marla family shows Katamaraju her real form with twelve hands. Katamaraju sees her and immediately realizes the bride is none other than the deity Ganga who has argued with him in the battlefield in the middle of the night. He thinks of her as his mother, the great goddess. He conceives of the thread on his wrist (*kankana*)as a band signifying a vow to kill his enemies rather than as a band for his marriage vows, and pours the rice on her head as an act of worship rather than as a ritual act of marrying. He makes an announcement that he is not going to untie the band on his wrist until he has defeated his enemies. The marriage is thus concluded.

The question remains whether this is a marriage or not. The singers of the epic say that Katamaraju and Ganga never lived together. Subba Rao reports that singers he has talked to even claim that Ganga and Katamaraju are never married. 6

The conflict between Ganga and Katamaraju extends to several male heroes of the epic, who represent Katamaraju., One such hero is Yerrayya, Katamaraju's associate. In the printed version of the epic, there is an incident where Yerrayya has an encounter with Ganga, more or less on the same lines as Katamaraju has with the deity. In another incident Ganga makes an attempt to see Katamaraju, but Basava, Siva's mount, comes in the way and prevents Ganga from going to him.

On the other hand, Ganga seems to get along well with all the women in the epic, especially Papanuka, Katamaraju's sister. Now Papanuka is born under a bad star, and it is told that if she gets married, she will ruin her husband's family. No one wants to marry her and take her into their family as a daughter-in-law. Attempts to marry her and bring the husband to stay in the bride's family as resident son-in-law do not succeed. The astrologers then suggest that a single-

pillar mansion be built away from town and Papanuka be placed in that mansion. Accordingly, the mansion is built and Papanuka is brought there in her sleep. Ganga, however, appears before her and tells her the misfortune that is in store for her. While talking to Papanuka, Ganga tells her how her own life is unfortunate too: she is married to Katamaraju but she has never had a chance to see him since the wedding.

B. The Births of Katamaraju and Ganga

The ambiguous relationship of Ganga and Katamaraju has deeper roots in their very births. To discuss the nature of these deities, we shall examine the stories of these births, first that of Katamaraju and then that of Ganga.

The birth of Katamaraju involves several Siva-like deities. Peddamma, Katamaraju's mother, is advised to worship Basava, Siva's mount or vehicle. Her equals, the other daughters-in-law of the family, have been performing rituals to Basava seeking sons. But Basava rejects Peddamma's offerings. Distressed at this rejection, she invites a group of *jangamas* and offers them food but they refuse to eat at her house because she does not have children. This makes her even more unhappy. Somesvara of Kalyan appears in Peddamma's dream and tells her that

if she goes to Kalyan he will give her children. Her husband Peddiraju, however, does not want to go. He does not believe in Peddamma's words and laughs at her for believing in dreams. He does not want to leave his country, relatives, and brothers. Not having children does not bother him because he is happy treating his brother's children as his own. On one occasion, however, Peddiraju wants to hear a recitation of the *Basavapurana*,and the Brahmans tell him that people without children should not listen to the *Basavapurana*.

Meanwhile, Somesvara of Kalyan decides to get Peddiraju to move to Kalyan for begetting children. He sends Kamadhenu, the wish-giving cow, to go to Pampadri, where Peddiraju lives. He sprinkles magic ashes on the cow which makes her pregnant. The pregnant cow goes to Pampadri and delivers a calf in Peddiraju's house. The calf laughs at her mother for delivering and pulling the straw of Peddiraju's house, knowing that he has no children. Peddiraju is sleeping at that time. He sees all this in his dream. In his dream he also hears the cow explaining to her calf that she did this to make Peddiraju go to Kalyan. Peddiraju wakes up and relates his dream to his elders and asks them to interpret the dream to him. They say that the deity of Kalyan has wanted to give him children. Therefore he should go to Kalyan. Peddiraju decides to go and divides up his herds and cash among his brothers and sister. Peddiraju's sister, Komarakka, chooses the heaviest of the cash boxes for her share. It turns out that the box contains the image of the goddess Durga. The brothers give her a large box of cash for expenses to worship the deity. Peddiraju then goes to Kayan.. There, he and his wife see a group of young boys grazing cattle. The boys are worshipping a deity. Peddiraju finds that the deity is Katakotesvarudu. He also learns that they are worshipping the deity so their cattle might be "fruitful." He asks them if the deity will give children to him. They answer that he will get a son if he worships the deity. Peddiraju and Peddamma worship the deity and make a vow that if they should have a son, they will name him after the deity. As they fall prostrate before the deity, the deity gives Peddamma an unripe fruit and a ripe fruit. The deity explains in her dream that the unripe fruit is Katamaraju, and the ripe fruit is Papanuka, a daughter.

That is how Katamaraju and his sister Papanuka are born, as a result of Siva's boon. But throughout the epic, the singers describe Katamaraju as an avatar of Krsna. They refer to him as the dark person and the herders trace his lineage from the Yadu of the *Mahabharata*.Katamaraju even sits on the seat of Krsnathe one that Krsna got from Indra and upon which only Krsna may sit. Katamaraju sits on

the seat to prove that he is Krsna himself.

As to Ganga's birth, it is also connected to Krsna. The well known *Bhagavatapurana* story about Krsna's birth is repeated in the epic. A voice from the sky predicts that Kamsa will be killed by his sister Devaki's eighth male child. A furious Kamsa imprisons the pregnant Devaki and her husband to make sure that he finds the child as soon as he is born so that he can kill him. Krsna is born in the middle of night. As soon as he is born he tells his father to take him immediately to

a cowherds' village across the Yamuna river to Yasoda, who has just then given birth to a girl, and bring Yasoda's girl-child to Devaki. This child, Yogamaya, is then presented to Kamsa, who comes the next morning ready to kill Krsna. Kamsa is frustrated at the child not being the boy he has expected it to be, and throws her up in the sky to fall on his sword. Instead of falling down on the sword, Yogamaya flies into the sky, uttering a warning to Kamsa that the child who would kill him is growing up elsewhere.

This Yogamaya, the epic narrates, is born as Ganga. So from the background angle of these prior identities, Katamaraju and Ganga, as Krsna and Yogamaya, are brother and sister.

C. Tricking the Enemy

Katamaraju's trickery is addressed not only toward the goddess but toward a king. Katamaraju has a huge herd of cattle. As the singers describe it, it covers an area of six *amadas* if it is together and twelve *amadas* if it is scattered. Such a herd, the pride of the Yadava family, suffers from lack of fodder. It is predicted that if he moved south, to Nellore, there would be enough grass for his cattle.

The relationship between the king of Nellore and Katamaraju is riddled with ambiguities. The agreement between them is apparently simple and straightforward; in return for all the male calves, the king will let Katamaraju graze on the king's lands. The actual words of the contract read: "All the grass that is born out of the water is yours, and all the male calves born from the cows are ours." Katamaraju's trick stems from an ingenious interpretation of these words. He grazes his cattle on the rice crop because it is also a kind of grass which grows from the water.

This leads to serious conflicts with king Nallasiddhi, resulting in a disastrous battle. The actual sequence of events which leads to the battle is not easy to reconstruct nor is it easy to determine who is at fault. In a manner similar to that of the *Mahabharata* story, where

complex motivations and conflicting principles make it difficult to determine who is right and who is wrong, the story of Katamaraju also does not allow for easy categories of good and bad. Katamaraju, however, does have a very strong determination to push the events towards the battle. He relentlessly tries by all the means possible to make the battle inevitable.

Nallasiddhi, the king of Nellore, is from the Coda family, the very same Coda family to which Katamaraju's uncle's killer belonged. Katamaraju takes this as an opportunity to avenge the death of his uncle. He describes to his associates how he killed all the persons against whom he had vowed revenge:

> I clobbered the killer of my great grandfather
> Killed the killer of my grandfather
> Tore up the killer of Simhadriraju
> Uprooted the killer of Peddiraju
> Supressed the killer of Yeranukaraju
> Chopped up the killer of Nalanukaraju 7

Having avenged the deaths of all these ancestors, Katamaraju exhorts his followers that now the time has come to avenge the death of Poluraju.

> The time to avenge Poluraju's death has come,
> and we should not go from here.
> Dispute has arisen between Siddhiraju and us,
> we cannot settle for peace with him.8

He thus exhorts his followers to avenge the death of his uncle. He even has a plan to precipitate conflict. He will pay all the rent for grazing on his land to the king and then will say: "We gave you all the money according to the contract. The contract says that all the grass born out of water belongs to us. You too are born out of water (along with grass). So, we bought you too. You are our property." Katamaraju discusses this plan with the men of his community. He tells them that after declaring that he owns the king he will reveal the old grievance they hold against him and will force a battle. Then

they will kill the king in the battle. Meanwhile, he instructs his men to take the cattle and graze them freely on the crops.

The singers of the epic claim that Katamaraju was in the right. But they also insist that Katamaraju advised his men to graze the cattle in the rice fields only as a retaliation to an attack by the local Boya

hunters. The hunters were instigated by king Nallasiddhi's second wife Kundamadevi (his mistress according to one version) to kill Katamaraju's cows. Subba Rao reports that some singers have told him that Katamaraju himself kills Kundamadevi's pet parrot, because his cows were being annoyed by the bird's chirping noises. 9 Kundamadevi then retaliates by encouraging the Boyas to kill Katamaraju's cows.

In any case, Katamaraju's intentions of avenging his ancestor's deathspagamakes this motive the central theme of the epic. Although revenge is a common motive in the martial epics of North Indiafor example, a major theme of the *Alha* epic is the young Banaphars' revenge of the deaths of their fathers10this is an unusual theme in South Indian epics.

D. Epics of Landed Castes and Epics of Trading Castes

Most of the prominently studied epics of South India are related to battle over territory, often a fight between cousins for control over land. Examples are the Palnadu epic from Andhra Pradesh and the Brothers story from Tamilnadu. These epics are claimed as their 'own' stories by the traditional land-owning "right hand" castes like Velamas, Reddis, and Kammas in the case of the Palnadu epic, and Velalars in the case of the Brothers epic. In these epics, male heroes dominate the story, with the role of the wives very much under control. Male heroes' relationships with sister or mother characters are stronger and considered more sacred in these epics than those with wives, who are always under check. Brenda E. F. Beck and I have shown that these epics reflect the ideology of the landowning castes. Men of these castes are proud, reflecting a macho spirit of willingness to fight and a determination to keep their honor untarnished. Beck says:

> The heroes belong to a dominant landed community, the Kongu Kavuntars. The story describes how these Kavuntars came to control much of the land in this local area and helps to justify their prominent political, economic, and demographic position today. It also reflects the fact that the local identity of this group is closely intertwined with images of the Kongu area as a whole. The Kongu (Velalar) Kavuntars are a non-Brahman community who proudly eat goat, sheep, and chicken meat (although they do not eat beef). The men are proud of their militaristic personalities, as well as of their agricultural skills. In sum, they are proud to be non-Brahmans. Much of the flavor of this local story stems from the central role of this caste in the account.11

Another set of epics which I discussed relate to the left-hand castes. These epics are woman-centered and the female hero of these epics dies not in a battle, but by self-immolation. Men in these epics are largely passive. The conflict is centered around the issue of protecting caste integrity and elevating caste status. Threat comes in the form of an alien, aggressive power against which the female hero fights. Epics which fall into this category are *Sanyasamma Katha*, *Kamamma Katha* and *Kanyaka Ammavari Katha*,all of which belong to the left-hand castes. 12

While discussing these epics, I included *Katamaraju* in the martial epic category, but I was unsure of that categorization. In a footnote I indicated:

> Despite the neat typology suggested here, *Katamaraju Katha* appears to be anomalous, not quite fully "martial." Gollas are probably a trading caste who have adopted a landowning martial ideology . . .13

E. Epic of Ambiguities

The events of the epic bring out the ambiguous nature of the Gollas. They are caught between two clearly delineated caste groups, the right-hand caste and the left-hand castes. Heroic prowess propels them towards the right-hand group, a status they can acquire only through death on the battlefield. Their hero Katamaraju has a relentless duty to lead them to this

status. But at the same time, Gollas do not seem to want right-hand caste status. The ambiguous nature of the caste permeates all the events of the epic. Most importantly it is reflected in the very relationship Katamaraju has with his caste deity, Ganga. As indicated above, Katamaraju is both Siva as well as Krsna. As Siva he is the ultimate destroyer. As Krsna, he is the ultimate trickster. His dual identities also define the problems in his relationship with Ganga. As Siva, Katamaraju is Ganga's husband. One of Ganga's problems that is confirmed in many myths, both in Telugu and Tamil, is to get Siva's attention exclusively for herself. She is Siva's second wife, constantly competing with her senior co-wife, Parvati. Siva has the difficult job of maintaining harmony between his two wives and constantly fails to achieve it. Ganga herself is a slippery goddess. Her watery nature apparently makes her unstable. Katamaraju attempts to control her, defy her superior claims, and subdue her so that she remains docile. As is indicated earlier, Katamaraju's objection to bowing to her is clearly that she is a woman and as a man

he wants to be superior to her. He tells Ganga to go to the women of his family who worship her. When their family divided their ancestral property, it was the woman Komarakka who chose the goddess. She was even given extra money to pay for the expenses. So that is where Ganga should go to receive worship. Katamaraju wants to keep his male status uncompromised by rejecting all the little female deities.

But there is another problem inherent in Katamaraju's identity. As Krsna, he is Ganga's brother because she was Yogamaya in her previous birth. And as a Visnu figure, Ganga is his daughter. Ganga was born out of Visnu's foot. Either way, it would be incestuous to be married to her. So the trickster in Katamaraju tries to avoid the problem by postponing the promise of marriage to a later birth. The conflicting identities of a husband and father are inherently impossible to maintain in one unit. In addition, the problem of a dominant wife is no comfort either. It should be noted that Ganga is older than Katamaraju; even when she appears as a young lady on the battlefield she is twelve whereas Katamaraju is only seven. Locked in this situation Katamaraju's strategies inevitably result in trickery.

Katamaraju's relationship with King Nallasiddhi is also riddled with conflicting motivations. He needs Nallasiddhi's lands to graze his cattle, but he also needs to kill Nallasiddhi to avenge his uncle's death. Inasmuch as Katamaraju needs the grass to graze his cattle, he needs the protection of the king who controls the land. But inseparable from this need is also Katamaraju's desire to kill him. The dilemma is clear. Just as his relationship with Ganga is riddled with ambiguities, so also is his relationship with the king.

Katamaraju is the king of the forest. His name, and his origin from Katredu, the king of the kadu, forest, relates him to the wild areas. He is constantly moving from forest to forest, taking his huge cattle herd with him. His nature inherently opposes him to the stable, city-oriented kings. Like his ancestors, Katamaraju, too, fights with ruling kings. Although there is an evident desire among the Yadavas for a status equal to that of kings, their leader Katamaraju never seems to have interest in settling to rule a kingdom. One incident prior to the final battle with king Nallasiddhi makes this point clear.

Katamaraju worries over the battle strategy. He remembers that all his forefathers were defeated in battle because they did not have the strategic advantage of fighting from a protected fort. He regrets not having a fort for himself. He is out in the open, exposed to the enemy who could attack at any time. He discusses this with his brother-in-law Padmaraghavudu, and asks him to build a fort for him. But

Padmaraghavudu advises him against a fort. He says, "Heroes who want to die in the battle do not need a fort. Forts are for timid people who want survive the battle. Your real forts are the cattle, and the Yadava warriors." Katamaraju accepts this advice.

If Katamaraju's nature sets him in conflict with kings, he is not particularly favorable to hunters either. Hunters worship Katredu, the deity whose aspect Katamaraju shares. 14 As mentioned earlier, the Boya hunters kill Katamaraju's cows and the conflict between Gollas and Boya hunters in the epic indicates that Katamaraju is not in harmony with the forest either.

Also, Katamaraju is under a curse to live like a *samnyasin*,childless and without family. The curse is given to his father by a group of samnyasins, whose hermitage he had destroyed by mistake.

The picture that emerges of Katamaraju is that he represents a bundle of opposites: married but a samnyasin, lord of the forest but opposed to the hunters and wild animals, king but unwilling to rule a settled kingdom, warrior but successful through trickery, Siva but also Krsna.

If Katamaraju represents ambiguous and trickster-like traits, Ganga does so too. She personifies *maya*,illusion, defying any possibility to grasp her real nature. With her unstable personality, she is described as "One who has feet on her chest." Very much like the Gollas, who want land to graze their cattle on but yet do not care for the land as a possession, Ganga, too, wants land to flow on, but does not want to live on it in any settled place. She is constantly moving. There is an element of trickery in Ganga's nature too. She has tricked Kamsa in her previous life. A story related about Ganga in Telugu folklore tells how in an effort to frustrate her co-wife Parvati, she hides water, making it impossible for Parvati to take a bath after her menstruation. She is also accused of being unstable. One of the many abuses that Yerrayya hurls against Ganga is that

> she married one, carried another and
> sat on the head of yet another.15

Reference here is to Ganga's marriage to Santanu in the *Mahabharata* story.16 Ganga lives with Santanu on the condition that he does not object to anything she does. Ganga then drowns, one after another, the seven children born to her by Santanu. When Bhisma is born, Santanu, who is unable to bear the thought of drowning this child, too, objects and Ganga promptly leaves him.

F. Gollas in a Tricky Life

The self-image of the Gollas in the epic is unmistakably clear: they think of themselves as Ksatriyas. Male characters of the epic have their names ending in *raja*,king, and the women have *devi*,indicating nobility and purity. Men constantly stand for values of bravery and willingness to die on the battlefield 17 fulfilling their *ksatra dharma*,whereas women invariably resort to dying on the funeral pyre of their husbands to insure their status as *vira patnis*,heroic wives. Similarly, the epic has repeated instances where the Golla kings show extreme readiness to offer protection to anyone who is in distress, fighting and risking their own lives for them. This quality fulfills an important prescription for Ksatriyas, that of saranagata raksana, saving those who seek refuge. Closely connected with this quality is also the duty of a Ksatriya to punish evil-doers and protect the virtuous. Details would be cumbersome to summarize, but every battle which the ancestors of Katamaraju engage in is due to their eagerness to offer shelter and protection to refugees fleeing from an oppressive king.18 Despite these demonstrations of valued Ksatriya qualities, however, recognition of their status as Ksatriyas remains a question. The self-image of the Gollas as rajas or Ksatriyas notwithstanding, the epic heroes' attitude to the land is itself ambiguous. The Gollas want land, not to rule over, but purely to use for grazing. Their interest in land is rather functional and to that extent ambiguous. They want the land yet they do not want it. They want control over the land to use it, but do not really care who owns it. They do not want to own the land because they have no interest in fighting to protect it. Their heroism, therefore, does not consist in dying for the land, but in winning access to it by one means or another, including trickery and cunning. Their heroism, however, has another dimension, revenge, that is not found in the landed-caste epics. The epic repeatedly mentions the theme of avenging the death of their ancestors. Katamaraju's interest, often hidden from the surface, is to avenge the death of his father. These ambiguities are reflected in the symbols Gollas use to represent themselves as a caste in the epic. They identify themselves with the Yadavas and trace their dynasty to Yadu of the *Mahabharata*.The Yadavas of that great epic are themselves of an uncertain status, not being fully recognized as Ksatriyas, as is the case with their leader, the god Krsna. In the epic, the caste is referred to as Yadavas, but their enemy king Nallasiddhi and his associates regularly refer to them as Gollas.

In the Telugu sociological structure of right-and left-hand divisions among castes, the Yadavas do not clearly belong to

either division. In pre-modern Andhra, Gollas were known as carriers of cash. Also, cattle are a form of money in an agrarian society. The Telugu word *sommulu* is used both for golden jewelry, another form of money, as well as cattle. In its singular form, *sommu* means "cash." 19 Dealings in cash and trade of cattle would put Gollas in the category of left-hand castes. In fact, Thurston reports that they belong to the left-hand caste division.20 But their relationship with land brings them close to the right-hand castes. Fluidity of cash on the one hand and the solidity of land on the other pull this caste in two opposing directions creating a tension and a constantly tricky existence.

Women in Andhra, as in most parts of India, wear one end of their saree as a sash (called *paita* in Telugu) over their shoulder. There is an interesting cultural symbolism in the style of wearing this paita. Women of right-hand caste groups wear their paita over the left shoulder and women of left-hand caste groups wear their paita over their right shoulder. Golla women wear it both ways: depending on the occasion. An aphorism popular in their caste says: right sash for caste use and left sash for going out.21 Ethnographic information on Gollas is far from adequate to make definitive statements about their rituals, beliefs, and social styles, but bits and pieces of evidence from reported research and my interviews with persons of Golla caste indicate their unwillingness to be classified into one or the other division.

The nature of their epic hero Katamaraju, and their caste goddess Ganga, encapsulate the ambiguities and tensions of this caste. Both as individual deities as well as a couple with internal tensions between them, Katamaraju and Ganga symbolize the ambiguous existence of the Gollas. The epic singers always begin their epic performance with a prayer to Ganga. In the rituals related to the epic, Ganga is the chief deity to whom all the offerings are made. In Enutala, in the Nallamala hills of Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh, there are images of Katamaraju and Ganga. Annually, in the summer Gollas perform a festival ritual to both the deities. And a big tree stands there separating the images of Ganga and Katamaraju, blocking each from seeing the other.

Notes

1. Research for this paper was made possible by grants from the Graduate School, University of Wisconsin-Madison and from the National Endowment

for the Humanities, Washington, D. C. My thanks are due to them and to David Shulman and Alf Hiltebeitel, who have read earlier versions of this paper and suggested many improvements.

2. Madigas are an Untouchable community belonging to the left-hand division. They are the traditional priests of Gollas, and also sing the epic at weddings, funerals, and at the annual rituals related to the epic. In addition, Gollas themselves sing the epic. Both groups claim authority to sing the epic. I suspect some tensions between the two groups of singers, although there is no significant variation in the versions each group sings.

3. Tangirala Venkata Subba Rao, *Katamaraju Kathalu*,2 volumes (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi, 1986, 1978).

4. Oral versions of the epic lack some important segments. The version I got of the arguments between Ganga and Katamaraju is not complete. Also I do not have the birth of Katamaraju in the oral version I collected. I therefore used the version of Subba Rao for the summaries given here of those incidents. For a short summary with other variations, cf. Wilbur Theodore Elmore, *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*: *A Study of the Local and Village Deities of Southern India* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1915), 100-104.

5. Telugu marriages conventionally include a tying of tali, the marriage band, as the ritual event signifying marriage. Here in the epic, however, there is no mention of tali. The pouring of rice on each other's head by the bride and the bridegroom is included in all marriages. In this story the event has a more important significance than usual, in that it takes the place of tali-tying.

6. Subba Rao, *Katamaraju Kathalu*,vol. 1. pp. cxxxxii-iii.

7. Ibid., vol. 1. 95.

8. Ibid., vol. 1. 95.

9. Ibid., vol. 1. cxii.

10. William Waterfield and George Grierson, trans. and ed., *The Lay of Alha* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 57-143.

11. Brenda E. F. Beck, *The Three Twins*: *The Telling of a South Indian Folk Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 25; cf. Velcheru Narayana Rao, "Epics and Ideologies: Six Telugu Folk Epics," in Stuart Blackburn and A. K. Ramanujan, eds., *Another Harmony*: *New Essays on the Folklore of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 134-49.

12. Narayana Rao, "Epics and Ideologies," 136-40, 144-47, 156-61.

13. Ibid., 147, n. 8.

14. Several literary texts in Telugu describe worship of Katredu by hunters. Allasani Peddanna (sixteenth century) describes hunters who participated in the royal hunt cooking the game they had hunted and offering the food to Katredu; *Manucaritramu* 4-60, as also Ponnekanti Telagnarya in his *Yayaticaritramu*,2-3. In Nellore and Chittur Districts of Andhra Pradesh farmers offer worship to Katamaraju on the fourth day, the day of the cattle, of Sankranti,

the harvest festival.

15. Subba Rao, vol. 2. 621.

16. J. A. B. van Buitenen, trans. and ed., *The Mahabharata*, *I*. *The Book of Beginning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 216-20.

17. In the landed caste epics men die on the battlefield. It is a requirement to the status of the hero that he die fighting to protect the land. In the Palnadu epic, the hero who has this status is the young Balacandrudu. In the Katamaraju epic, most men die fighting, but not on the battlefield. They die from the wounds received in the battle, but after the battle. The oldest hero of the epic is Avula Valuraju. He fights with Kalabhuta Ganguraju, the king of Khandemondemulakota. He kills his enemy in the battle, but he himself dies later, due to the wounds received in the fight. His wife Vallamma commits *sati* and dies on her husband's funeral pyre. Valuraju's eldest son Simhadriraju similarly dies fighting with Sindhubhallaniraju the king of Srikurmamam, again from wounds sustained in the battle. His wife Simhadrisita dies on the funeral pyre of her husband. The pattern continues with Yeranukaraju, the third son of Valuraju, who fights with Yerrabhupati. A significant exception to this pattern is the death of Pddiraju, Katamaraju's father, who dies on the battlefield.

18. In the landed caste epics, the heroes die fighting against a faction of their extended family because of disputes regarding inheritance. The major issue in these epics is the rulership of the land. In the Palnadu epic, the dispute is between the cousins. Similarly in the Elder Brothers epic, the battle is between clansmen. Enemies in these epics have the same status. But in Katamaraju, the fight is not over who should rule the land, but over an injustice done by a ruling king to someone or other who seeks the protection of the Yadava heroes. Yadavas fight for the cause of the people whom they offer to protect. Valuraju fights with the king of Khandemondemulakota because some Brahmans who were in the service of the king seek Valuraju's protection. They were the king's accountants, and they embezzled some of the king's money. When the king was going to punish them for their crime, they asked for six months to make up for the loss of money, and escaped from the kingdom and sought Valuraju's protection. Valuraju offered them refuge, which resulted in a battle with the king. Simhadriraju's fight with Sindhuballaniraju of Srikurmam also is caused by a similar incident. Sindhubhallaniraju accused some Srivaisnavas of thievery and tortured them. The Srivaisnavas sought refuge with Simhadriraju, who offered them protection and fought with Sindhubhallaniraju. In all these instances the kings with whom the Yadavas fought have a recognized status as ruling kings. Thus in the Katamaraju epic the enmity is between the Yadavas and kings of a higher status.

19. One of the threats that Ganga makes against Katamaraju is that without worshipping her, he cannot earn enough money to pay the grazing rent on land. If he agrees to worship her, she offers him "crores" of money.

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20. Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*,7 vols. (Madras: Government Press, 1909), vol. 2, 285-96.

21. The image of Ganga in all the temples where Gollas worship her has her paita on the right shoulder.

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5
Night of the Growing Dead: A Cult of Virabhadra in Coastal Andhra

David M. Knipe

It is of the utmost importance to traditional Hindus that those who have lived and died remain contented in whatever guises of afterlife they exist. The singular fact that undergirds this importance is *samsara*,transmigration, a cosmic process that dispassionately synchronizes afterlife with prelife. From late Vedic texts down to the modern ritual compendia in daily use for *sraddha* rites, a recurrent phrase addressed to the ancestors is "Be satisfied," that is, be pleased and contented with all that we are providing, in the work of these rituals, for your physical and emotional needs. This attentiveness to the bodily and affective requirements of the dead, if more systematic than most, is nevertheless one that is shared with almost all traditional cultures, and is remarkable only to those in the modern world who forget their ancestors and believe the dead to be out of touch with life. Hinduism maintains an extraordinarily rich set of traditions concerning the livelihood of ancestors, not only in its great schedules of rituals but also in myth, folklore, iconography, drama, and dance. Some basic notions have been active for two to three millenia; others are untraceable but possibly a great deal older. These traditions display simultaneously a unique South Asian homogeneity, immediately recognizable, and a vivid overlay of local and regional expressions. Only a few of the latter have been objects of ethnographic study.

A concern found throughout the Hindu world, and again one shared with most traditional cultures, is anxiety over the fate of one

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who has died the *untimely death* (Sanskrit: *akala mrtyu* or *akala marana*).This phrase is accepted into most of the vernaculars of South Asia, *untimely* covering all those bad, unnatural, out-of-order deaths that are premature due to accidents, diseases, snake-bites, suicides, or other fates. It is applied in particular ways to cases of the deaths of infants, children, those who do not attain the marriage vows. In agricultural metaphor, often employed in human/plant/food homologies connected with death and rebirth, the untimely death may be considered insufficient ripening, or worse, something akin to crop failure, unseasonable killing. The subject of this essay is a regional cult that addresses the problem of deviant death, of Death that has worked perversely to frustrate the normal stream of personal birth and death and rebirth, and the orderly progression, generation to generation, of family lineages. When individuals die before they have attained the householder stage, that is, married and raising children who can attend to them ritually after death, they are cosmically stranded from the point of view of transmigration. Their persons excluded from ritual progressions and their lineages devastated, their dilemmas may leave no recourse but rage and malevolent behavior. If their premature deaths were violent ones, such rage may be compounded to the point of uncontrollability. They are among the most dangerous and poignant of the disgruntled dead, no one's "Fathers," for they never had the chance to become ancestors.

This essay, a preliminary report on a complex, eclectic, and frequently elusive set of traditions, is focused on a medium-sized town in the coastal zone of Andhra Pradesh, the town of Rajahmundry in East Godavari District, located on the left bank of the Godavari at the point where the great river splits into deltoid streams for its final forty miles to the Bay of Bengal. Fieldwork for this study was accomplished from September through December 1980, in January 1985, and from October 1987 through January 1988. Incidentally, this tradition, undiscussed in the scant ethnography of coastal Andhra,

was not initially targeted for study, but surfaced in the form of nocturnal noise so demanding that another, quieter project was temporarily displaced. 1

A. Procession, Possession, and Renewal

The riveting explosion of drums that shatters the midnights of Sivaratri, or such lunar months as Karttika, Magha, and Vaisakha, can be heard from a distance of two miles. Those who know the staccato cadences distinguish beats that encourage states of trance and pos-

session from those that rescue the possessed, pulling them down just in time and saving them from the prolonged terrifying embodiment of spirits who are both divine and demonic. For the drums belong to the ritual apparatus of *Virabhadrudi sambaram*,the nocturnal procession of Virabhadra that is at once a defiant dance of death, a boisterous overnight pilgrimage, and a solemn celebration of renewal by a wider family that includes deceased children among its vital and active members.

The focus of these volatile minipilgrimages is upon the disgruntled dead, those who died in infancy or childhood only a few months back, or as much as sixty, seventy, or more years ago. They are centers of attention precisely because their presences are known to their parents and other family members, frequently from the days immediately following burial. In their demonstrable and often forceful continuity with the living, such presences call for two responses within the traditions of the cult in this particular town: first, routine food, the lighting of lamps, and other offerings in the form of pujas either at a home shrine or in collective worship performed by a pujari in a Snake-anthill temple located at the south end of town and, second, annual regeneration via the long night's procession from the home or Snake-anthill temple westward across town to the Godavari River that forms the precise limit of human habitation. Let us consider details of the procession and the ritualists before turning to the home shrine, the temple traditions, and the mythic/folkloric backdrop to the tradition.

Virabhadrudi sambaram,as it is known in Telugu, may be performed either on the great "night" of Siva, Mahasivaratri, the fourteenth of the dark or waning half of the lunar month of Magha, which is celebrated in Rajahmundry for two successive nights, or at night throughout certain lunar months, Karttika (October-November), Magha (January-February), and Vaisakha (April-May) being favored. As in other death traditions such as the pan-Indian Pitrpaksa, the fortnight of the Fathers (ancestors), the normally inauspicious waning lunar period is appropriate, and the night time is in keeping with otherworldly intercourse. The procession may be occasioned, however, by a forthcoming auspicious event in the family, particularly a marriage, or some milestone such as a new house or new job, or a vow or long pilgrimage to be fulfilled, and thus becomes a ritual means of including the deceased in occurrences of good fortune. A darker meaning may underscore the clangorous procession as well, the hope that it will for the time being "satisfy" the deceased, forestalling malevolence that might spoil the party, perhaps even the family destiny.

The procession has an order and a cast of characters. In the 1980s we are most probably witnessing the tail end of a longtime tradition, with substitutions in the lineup, absences of certain specialists, vague or missing associations between myths, symbols, and performances, and virtually no self-recognition by the ritualists or laity of how this tradition relates to rituals and performances elsewhere in Hinduism. What survives, however, is dramatically instructive, not only for our knowledge of regional Hinduism, but also of human responses to the universal tragedy of child death.

At the head of the procession are two (sometimes more) *prabhas* in the form of red cloth banners stretched kitelike across bamboo frames about nine feet high, each carried upright like a sail by a man from the Kapu (Cultivator) or Sali (Weaver) castes. According to ritualists involved in *Virabhadrudi sambaram* these prabhas add wholeness and beauty to the procession. Then come the musicians (*bhajantri*),usually Barbers, but here in the local tradition Potters (Kummaris). They have special training on the drums, which appear in three sizes (the *viranam*, *dolu*,and *tassa*),all slung on ropes around the neck. The viranam is rubbed intensely with a curved stick to produce a weird sound more tuba-like than percussive; when combined with the other drums the effect is overwhelming. 2 Wooden nine-holed flutes with reeds

(*sahnai*)are also played, always by Muslims. All the musicians form a moving half-circle enclosing one or more representatives of ritualist groups such as *virakumaras*, *viramustis*,and *jangamas*,and these in turn precede the family group. The virakumara, a "young male hero (vira)," is dressed in brilliant red, sometimes olive green, the favorite colors of Siva according to the ritualists, and he wears silver ankle bells, sometimes epaulettes. He may blow a conch-shell (*sankha*),ring a bell (*ghanta*),carry a silver trident (trisula) in his right hand or sometimes clenched crosswise in his teeth as he gyrates, hands and arms arched together over his head in the swaying motions of a cobra. Some carry in the right hand a small vajra-like club. One Sali man of 25 who makes his living producing cigars in a tobacco shop has danced as a virakumara since he was nine, continuing the role performed by his father before him. Viramustis, another category of processional dancers, are locally regarded as a Sudra caste group of mendicants or beggars associated in exchanges with designated other castes, including the Komatis (Traders) of the twice-born castes. They are known for certain entertainment or ritual performances, and may be descendants of medieval groups who acted as temple guardians. But they are not currently represented in Rajahmundry, and other jatis have taken their roles,

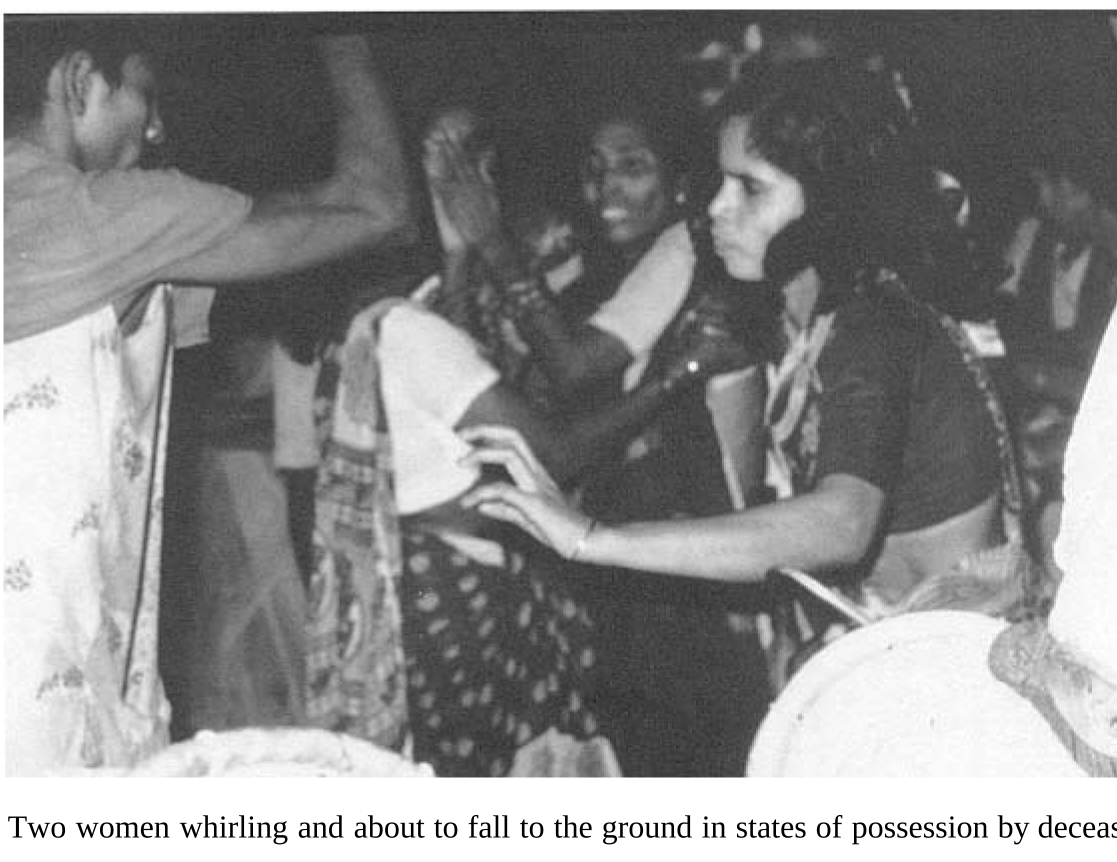
becoming "viramustis" not by birth in a caste but by virtue of their specific style of dance. For example, another caste whose occupation is weaving, the Devangams, may become "viramustis" for the purposes of the nocturnal procession. Popular etymology seems to play a role here, since *musti* indicates a "clenched fist" and the dancer who stamps his feet and clenches his fists is displaying the emotion of anger. The Jangams (jangamas) are another Andhra Sudra caste with longtime links to twice-born merchant groups, serving them in ritual performances. At one time, like the Viramustis, they were evidently more closely involved in the processions, but now the Weavers or other jatis may in their absence substitute for them as well. 3

After the prabha-carriers, musicians, and various dancers comes the largest group in each segment of a procession, namely the family members who have engaged all the ritualists, usually by arrangements with the pujari of the Snake-anthill temple. The family may be a dozen persons or several scores in number, proceeding under canopies, one or another member (usually a brother or sister of the deceased) carrying atop his or her head the wooden, brass, or woven-straw tray from the home shrine, all of them surrounded not only by the cacaphony of thunderous drums, shrill flutes, shouts and stomping feet, but also clouds of smoke from *sambrani* crystals burning in iron braziers or clay pots, a scented blue smoke intended, like specific cadences of the drums, both to create and alleviate a climate for momentous encounters with the world of spirits (see plate 7). And all along the streets and lanes of the town the arrival of that climate is announced by sudden violent seizures, possessions of the marchers, and even unsuspecting bystanders, by the spirits of children recently or long ago departed from the living family group (see plate 8).

As is the case elsewhere in South Asia from Tibet and Nepal to Sri Lanka, states of possession in coastal Andhra are frequent occurrences, regarded as serious occasions of communication with the worlds of the supernatural. In the *Virabhadrudi sambaram* possessions are by those who have suffered untimely deaths before they could become ritually completed humans by means of childhood, educational, and marital life-cycle rites. Therefore possessions are outbursts from an incurably liminal realm. Rather than shrink from such chilling and dangerous contacts, marchers willingly risk their bodies as vehicles for the spirits, becoming agents who transmit to the family the immediate states of mind and wishes of their stranded kin. Although some men do become possessed, it appears to be largely the women in the family, and most frequently younger mothers in their twenties and



7. An extended family procession, one of many hundreds during the nights of Karttika month, reaches the river after sunup. A ritualist with epaulettes on his fancy vest and noisy anklets of silver dances before them. Photo by David Knipe.



8. Two women whirling and about to fall to the ground in states of possession by deceased

children's spirits during the nocturnl procession to the river. A "Viramusti" stomps his dance at left, while a third woman claps her hands to the explosive beat of drums. Photo by David Knipe.

thirties, who sway or whirl, slowly at first, then quickly before they abandon the march and fall screaming to the ground. As they cry to Virabhadra "Save me, rescue me!" the circle of ritualists tightens about the writhing person, the incense pot is brought closer, and the eerie cadences of the drums and shouts of specialists turn to techniques of deliverance and consolation.

Those possessed are known to be undergoing a perilous ascent while they are out of self-control, and therefore they must be brought down, the safely completed descent being the salient charge of ritualists. Sometimes neither the incense nor the several extricating drum beats are successful in the rescue and a fresh lime must be torn in one hand, its juice poured on the head of the possessed one, and the halves thrown away in opposite directions. Coconut juice or water are available as alternatives for such *santikarma*.Frequently people who hear or observe processions going by their houses at three or four o'clock in the morning become possessed, and often, to prevent such spontaneity, susceptible persons are restrained and kept back from windows and doors. Such incidental, unanticipated possessions may be by spirits of one's deceased child kin, or even by other spirits, a woman, for example, being possessed suddenly by her husband's deceased former wife.

The last possessions occur at the riverside, at the special *ghetto* (Telugu: *revu*)at which all processions conclude, and when these have ended in descent, and all of the wild (*raudra*)activity is over, the scene changes to one of calm and solemn puja. Family members bathe in the darkness of the river and the ash-fruits (vibhuti-pandus) representing the deceased child, usually three in number, are taken from the head-borne tray and washed in the river, dried, provided with yellow turmeric powder and three vermilion stripes, then installed back on the tray for a complete schedule of offerings, including lamps, incense, halved coconuts, bananas, rice grains, flowers, cotton threads, and coins. Every member of the family presents herself or himself in *namaskara* before this tranquil and opulent minishrine, after which the tray with its regenerated ash-fruits is hoisted again onto a brotherly or sisterly head for the composed and uneventful return journey (see plate 9). The routine rituals have once again established control.

An additional ritual of the *teppa* (float) is performed by many of the women at the riverside. It has two forms, which may be done separately, or as a sequence at once, *maila* (ritual pollution) being an annual ceremony for the removal of impurity, for which a pith float is set on the river, and *polla* (flower) for the celebration of an auspicious occasion, for which a sled-like arrangement covered with colorful



9. Another family returns from the riverside renewal of the home shrine's three ash-fruits, which are now covered with offerings of turmeric, red powder, coconut halves, bananas, mango leaves, incense, lamps, threads, rice grains, and other items. A ritualist accompanies at right. Photo by David Knipe.

papers is the teppa (see plate 10). Both forms of teppa contain burning ghee-lamps that present a warming scene to the families on the shore as they drift into the night on the dark currents of the Godavari.

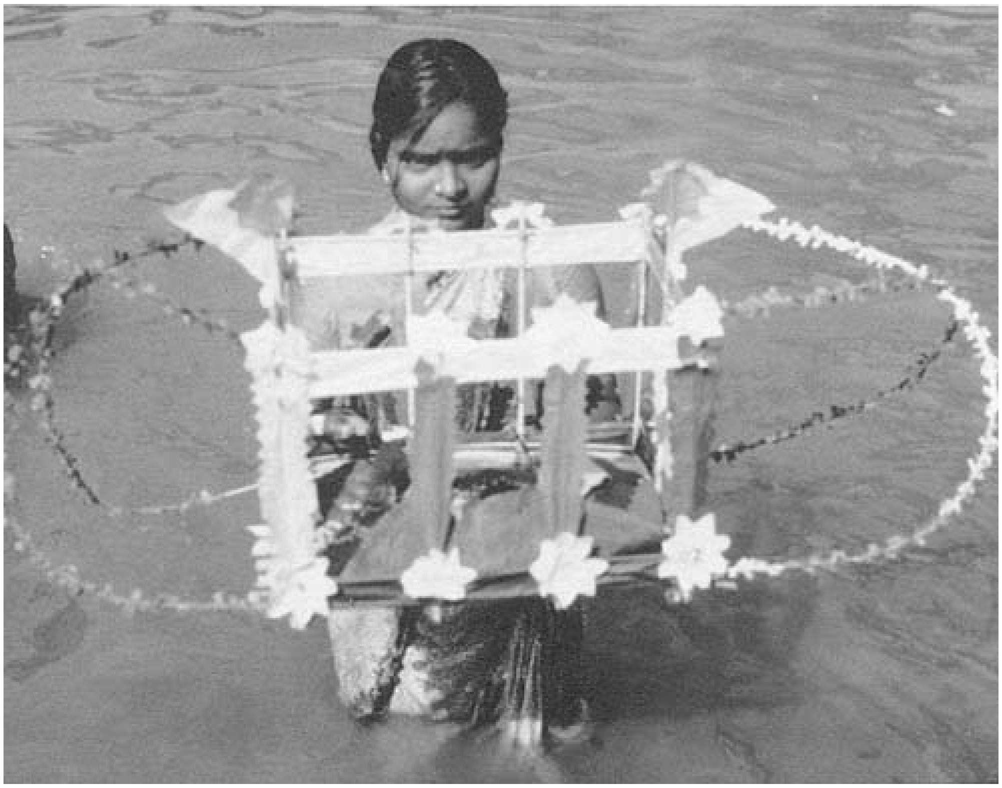
Procedures at the riverbank may be under the direction of a virakumara, viramusti, or jangam, or entirely without professional guidance. Although the majority of caste groups in attendance are non-Brahman, in correspondence with the predominant Sudra-varna population of the town, and although local Brahman ritualists (*karmakandis*)describe *Virabhadrudi sambaram* as a "non-Brahman event," Brahman families do take part in the process and individuals can be observed in states of possession or restraint from possession. From the numbers of participants it would appear that virtually the entire town, including the Scheduled castes or Harijans (Malas and Madigas), can become involved in these performances. In Karttika and Margasirsa 1980 there were from a dozen to twenty processions involving several hundreds of people each night, and during the two nights of Sivaratri 1985 crowds of several thousands were continuous.

B. Ash-Fruits, the Home Shrine, and the Snake-Anthill

The spirits of deceased children who possess one or another family member are represented iconically throughout the procession, as they are while installed in the temple or the home shrines, by the ash-fruits borne on the heads of marchers. These vibhuti-pandus (Sanskrit/ Telugu *vibhuti*,the "ashes" of cowdung sacred in particular to Siva, and the combined mystical powers of Siva, and Telugu *pandu*,"fruit"), are usually three in number, as noted earlier, borne on a single-framed tray as a portable shrine in the procession. One of them comes from the Snake-anthill temple collection, whereas two more are purchased from the Potters. As a triad they move not in the ordinary sense of human motion, but by a process of interior struggle, combativeness, even warfare. We will return to this notion of the children of rage in parts three and four of this essay.

The vibhuti-pandus are made of cowdung ash mixed with acacia gum and pressed by the Potters into molded cones with rounded tops. According to the Potters they are created in three sizes, small, medium, and large, named after measures of rice. Those that are carried are usually five to seven inches high, and this size predominates in the huge collection

stacked in the Snake-anthill temple's interior shrine. But since these ash-fruits are said to "grow" as they are worshipped and renewed annually at the river, many of those installed in home



10. A young mother places a decorated "flower" float (*teppa*) with burning oil lamp on the Godavari River at the end of her Karttika procession. It is for her infant son who died two years previously and frequently possesses her. Usually she performs the annual procession in Magha month, but this night it was to include him in the auspicious occasion of entering new living quarters. Photo by David Knipe.

shrines and in the temple are larger, as much as two feet in height and almost as much in diameter at the base. Their growth, of course, is vivid testimony to the living, active, ripening presence of these individuals who are in but not of this world.

To cite an example, a young mother of three children lost her youngest, a boy eighteen months old, in 1978. He possessed her the day after his death. She recognized him as "a virabhadra," began his worship on a regular basis, and has performed pujas for him ever since, unassisted by any priest or specialist. She does these every day and not just on the requisite Mondays and Saturdays. Usually it is in the month of Magha that she performs the procession from her apartment in the center of town to the river. Because of the propitious occasion of moving to this new apartment in 1980, however, the procession was done in Karttika. By 1985 she had performed the *Virabhadrudi sambaram* seven times. In the home shrinea yellow, blue, and white miniature temple of wood six feet high, elaborately decorated, and occupying a sizeable portion of the limited living spacethe single vibhuti-pandu, about ten inches high, is encircled by a silver serpent coil with five heads. When I was invited to see it, after an unannounced arrival at 9 p.m., it was covered with garlands of fresh flowers and surrounded by a dozen bananas, a cup with spoon, plates of cooked food, two lamps, and a number of other ritual items. She admits to being possessed frequently by this son, as recently as one month prior to my visit, and unconnected to the *Virabhadrudi sambaram*.She has two other children, a son and a daughter, ten and five years of age in 1985.

A second example is a tragic case that occurred in a Potter family in 1976 when two brothers, five and three years old, died the same day from accidentally drinking insecticide. Their parents both died within the next year, of grief according to relatives. Pujas to them as virabhadras fell to the responsibility of their uncle, their father's younger brother, who does the *Virabhadrudi sambaram* annually in the company of the wider family and relatives. But like many other families that have lost children, this one does not undertake daily pujas for them within the dwelling (although they have on their wall a garlanded photo of the two boys side by side in cradles readied for burial). Instead, vibhuti-pandus representing the two boys are placed in the nearby Snake-anthill temple (see plate 11) where they are worshipped on a daily basis, along with hundreds of others, by the pujari, an elderly Kapu man, or one of his six students.

This particular snake-anthill (Telugu *pamu*,"snake," *putta*,"anthill," i.e., the mound made by termites, which are known in South Asia as



11. Interior shrine of the Snake-Anthill temple where devotees have stacked up hundreds of ash-fruits (*vibhuti-pandus*) for collective pujas. Note their replication of the natural white-ant (termite) turret at center, against which are leaning two carved wooden statues representing deceased female children as goddesses. Photo by David Knipe.

white ants) may be regarded as the center of the cult of Virabhadra in Rajahmundry. Throughout South Asia termite mounds are appreciated as sacred channels connecting the three worlds, their netherworld tunnels continuing up through this world into castle-like structures with turrets, self-arisen hierophanies silently stretching skyward, each a natural *axis mundi*.Termites are known to tunnel far into the earth, as deep as forty meters to locate water and bring it to the surface. 4 Their above-ground structures can be two meters high, so it is not surprising that their invisibly growing mounds are significant in popular cults of the dead.5 The fact that anthills are universally regarded as residences of *nagas* (serpents), more specifically cobras, is an additional reinforcement of this connection with chthonic realms, death, and rebirth.

Like all important snake-anthills, this one has its story. This locale in Tadithota at the south end of town was once a garden with an anthill inhabited by two cobras who returned to it no matter how many times snake-handlers tried to remove them. The snake-anthill became a shrine (*gudi*)"about two hundred years ago." The current pujari, a 67-year-old Kapu, remembers a simple hut around it when he was a boy growing up in the Virabhadra cult traditions associated with the shrine. Eventually it became the two-room edifice with blue-pillared, roofed porch that exists today. For many decades the pujari who preceded him was possessed here by the spirit of his deceased infant sister, who announced that it was she who would remain here in the form of the serpents. And indeed, although seldom seen, the cobras still are here, because they eat offerings regularly set out for them. A 17-year-old granddaughter of the former pujari (who died in 1981 "at the venerable age of 120"), is occasionally possessed, and indications are that the spirit is determining a successor "host." Because he does not become possessed, the current pujari is not a candidate for this additional responsibility.

The temple now consists of two rooms, an anteroom intended for the worship of Venkatesvara, Lord of Tirupati, and an inner room built around the five-foot-high termite mound, actually incorporating it into the walls of its northeast corner. When eyes adjust to the light of a single oil lamp, hundreds of ash-fruits may be seen on a foot-high shelf that projects from three walls, and in this otherworldly scene a striking congruency of form becomes apparent: the common five-to-seven-inch ash-fruits used in the processions are identical in size, proportions, even texture, to the termite-created turrets of their ancient castle rising from the earth. Whatever other avenues the

vibhuti-pandu symbolism might pursue (and these are to be discussed in the fourth part of this essay), this particular homology is clear and unmistakable: the invisibly growing ash-fruit-children are respectfully laid among the invisibly growing anthill peaks, where channels of communication to the other world are as open as they are ancient.

Ash-fruits fashioned by the Potters are not the only symbols in this chamber of the growing dead. Rising out of the ash-fruits blended into the termite turrets is an arch of hammered brass, crowned by a wild lion-faced mask. The arch may display the rainbow that emerges, according to popular belief, 6 from an anthill, and the mask above it the lion-faced avatara of Siva. Stacked in corners are dozens of natural conical stones, squat rounded shapes like giant concrete mushrooms. More prominent are the goddesses standing erect at the center of attention among the ash-fruits with encircling naga-coils and guardian hoods. They are in two guises, one fashioned by the Potters into a female figure from molded cowdung ashes and acacia gum (like the ash-fruits), painted with features, bright red sari, green blouse, and jewelry, and provided with a raised stick in her clenched right fist. This type is single, just under six inches tall, and is situated with a burning oil lamp just south of the termite mound. The other goddess style is multiple and entirely different, each 16 inches tall, crudely carved of black wood, arms at her sides. Her tiny breasts are bare, and a slim girdle on her wide hips is the only clothing but for bangles and what appear to be epaulettes on her shoulders. Her brows are triply lined, providing her with a vaguely worried gaze. Although the ash-fruits are requisite for both male and female children, these Virakanyaka goddesses are optional representations for girls alone, positioned in either one of these two iconic forms in the home shrine or in the temple.

C. The God, the Goddess, and the Children of Rage

Virabhadrudi sambaram is a ritual procession well named: Virabhadra is the terrific deity born from Siva's rage, a personification of uncontrollable anger that burst from the forehead of the great god who would not tolerate two events: the performance of a great world-reaffirming sacrifice that deliberately excluded him, and then, because of this unbearable insult, the self-immolation of his mate Sati. This tragedy of discrimination and outsiderhood, of self-mortification and brutal revenge, is a powerful one told throughout India, for it is the theme of Daksa's sacrifice, one that has its basis in the ambiguities of

exclusiveness in the Brahmanic rituals of Vedic Hinduism. It has particular connotations in those few parts of South India such as coastal Andhra where great Vedic soma sacrifices are still performed in ancient authenticity by a tiny minority of vaidika Brahmans in the midst of a vast population of non-twiceborn-caste Hindus.

Fiery power, ascetic frenzy, mobility on the wind, the garment of red are already in the late Rgveda (e.g., 10:136) associated with the outsider god, Rudra, the fierce resident of the mountain wilderness. Later Vedic texts stress his isolation from the prescribed shares of sacrifices, regarding him always with awe. The opening line of the *Satarudriya* celebrates the wrath of Rudra (*Vajasaneyi-samhita* 16.1; *Taittiriya-samhita* 4.5.1, the latter being one of the most frequently recited texts of Andhra vaidika Brahmans). It is in several different *parvans* of the *Mahabharata*,the first *kanda* of the *Ramayana*,and numerous Puranas, however, that certain myths prefigured in the Brahmanas elaborate details of this collision of two opposing energies, one creative, the other destructive, both of them hunting the elusive and mysterious essence of the sacrifice. The centerpiece is an asvamedha, a horse sacrifice intended to reintegrate and renew the cosmos, with all the deities but Rudra-Siva invited by Daksa to take a share. Arriving with his troops (*ganas*,successors of the Rudras or Maruts of Vedic Rudra), Siva is possessed by wrath that emerges from his brow (or from an uprooted twist [*jata*]of his matted hair) in the form of uncontrollable Virabhadra, a fireball of vengenance who proceeds to dismantle the sacrifice and one of its components, namely, the gods. Daksa (Prajapati) is singled out for beheading, this sacrificer becoming the sacrifice who flees as a deer into the skies.

Another dimension of the attack on Daksa's sacrifice is expressed in a variant, the dual manifestation of vindictive power, masculine Virabhadra and feminine Bhadrakali or Mahakali. Kali as avenging angel may be seen here as the dreadful aspect of the goddess, balancing the benevolent and loyal Sati (Parvati), wife of Siva. For in the Puranic versions of the Daksa myth, Sati is Daksa's daughter; in response to the unconscionable insult by her father to her husband she establishes her own sacrificial fire of self-immolation and her death precipitates the awesome rampage of Siva/Virabhadra/Kali. 7

Significant threads of the myth are too numerous to trace here, but a few highlights can be selected from a single text. The *Siva-purana* portrays the dramatic scene in two quite different versions, *Rudrasamhita* 2 and *Vayaviya-samhita* 1.8 In both of them Virabhadra, Bhadrakali, and the ganas cooperate in the carnage until the earth is soaked with

the blood of the gods, and in both there is eventual restoration of the sacrifice and the gods by the grace of supreme Siva, who is then eulogized by all. But whereas the former variant has the characteristics of a procession of heroes, a war party on the march, the latter one depicts a riot, chaos overwhelming order, the ganas totally out of control as the destruction overflows beyond the target sacrifice and threatens even the sun. It is the difference between a decisive battle and *pralaya*,the destruction of the universe. 9

Numerous details in the Sanskrit *Siva-purana* are mirrored in the textless Telugu *Virabhadrudi sambaram*.Virabhadra carries (in addition to other weapons) a club, thunderbolt, and spear, and he wears noisy anklets and gold epaulettes. There are terrifying drums (five are named in one passage), horns, and conches as cacophonous background for those who march and dance, shout, laugh, and cry. These frenzied dancers are the ganas (as those possessed in *Virabhadrudi sambaram* are known as *ganacaris*).Virabhadra's presence is that of a lion, he roars like a lion, and his lion-faced cohorts are mounted on lions (prominently displayed on the arch over the snake-anthill is a brass lion-mask,10 and the ritualists today speak of the possessions of marchers as "lion-like," even as those possessed, in their moments of terror, shout to the lion-faced Sarabha, conqueror of the man-lion avatara of Visnu, Narasimha).11 Finally, we may note that the splendor and lustrous power (prabha) of Virabhadra, marching at the fore, increases even as that of the sacrifice is depleted. (The significance of the red banners carried as forerunners of today's processions has been forgotten; it is said simply that they add beauty and wholeness, and they have always been called prabhas).12 Almost all of these details occur in the *Mahabharata* in the several tellings of the Daksa-sacrifice-myth, although not all in the same parvan. If one were to look for a tighter focus, a "program text" for *Virabhadrudi sambaram*,it might well be one or another version of the *Siva-purana*.

Regardless of textual support, it is clear that in this part of coastal Andhra the wrathful Virabhadra, antithesis of establishment sacrifice and its circulation of cosmic energies, is alive and well. He is one Virabhadra, Siva's rage personified, and many *virabhadras*,all the children of rage who, even if they died after taking their mother's milk for a single day, are said to be, like Virabhadra, the children of Siva. The dual manifestation of the Sanskrit texts is here in the cult as well: male children become Virabhadra, female children become Virakanyaka, who is, like Bhadrakali, a heroine-goddess.13 There seems to be no role in the current processions for the goddess, but as noted earlier,

one of the two goddess types, the one of molded ashes, is positioned in the Snake-anthill temple as a militant guardian with raised stick in hand. She is reminiscent of Bhadrakali (also known as Jaya; cf. *Mahabharata* 9.61.9-11), Virabhadra's feminine counterpart in the Daksa myth according to the *Vamana-purana* (4.21ff.), stationed club in hand to guard the south and east, as Virabhadra guards north and west. In the Snake-anthill temple this alert and brightly painted goddess is indeed facing south.

As an illustration of this interaction of deities and spirits with the human world, and one further example of personal participation in the cult, there is an extraordinary individual in the town, a lorry mechanic who serves as the second generation recognizing a child who died 52 years ago at the age of five. This 52 (or 57)-year-old spirit is his older brother who died when he, the future lorry mechanic, was only a few months old. His mother established the home shrine and performed pujas until some twenty-odd years ago when the lorry mechanic took over the routine, adding his own shrine beside that of his mother, and attending to both. The family is Golla (Shepherd); he is successful in his work, married, with two children. But some years ago he was arbitrarily possessed by this spirit of his elder brother who demanded more attention. This interfered with his work, so he contracted with the spirit: if pujas were performed every day, the older brother agreed to possess him only on the two nights of Sivaratri. And so the lorry mechanic has become the most celebrated ritualist in the *Virabhadrudi sambaram* (see plate 12), dancing ecstatically for hours, his matted locks flying, a silver trident clutched in his hands. The brother has been satisfied with the dance, and life has been successful for the family. Eventually, says the lorry mechanic, his own son may take over the pujas for his deceased uncle.

In his own mind the lorry mechanic is three things when possessed by his brother and dancing on Sivaratri. He is his brother the virabhadra, the god Virabhadra, and transcendent Siva. Not only is he participating in the march on the sacrifice but also performing Siva's epic *tandava* dance of world-destruction. And he is well versed, thus aware that these dances are one and the same. The life he now leads is deliberately and increasingly Sanskritized. He considers himself an *upasaka*,with *brahmajñana* as his goal. He describes the vibhuti-pandu as "a linga," as "Siva" (whereas most seem to regard it as something vaguely separate and familial). The additional small vibhuti-pandus in his increasingly elaborate puja-room (already a third of the family living quarters) are apparently tallies of his annual performance roles.



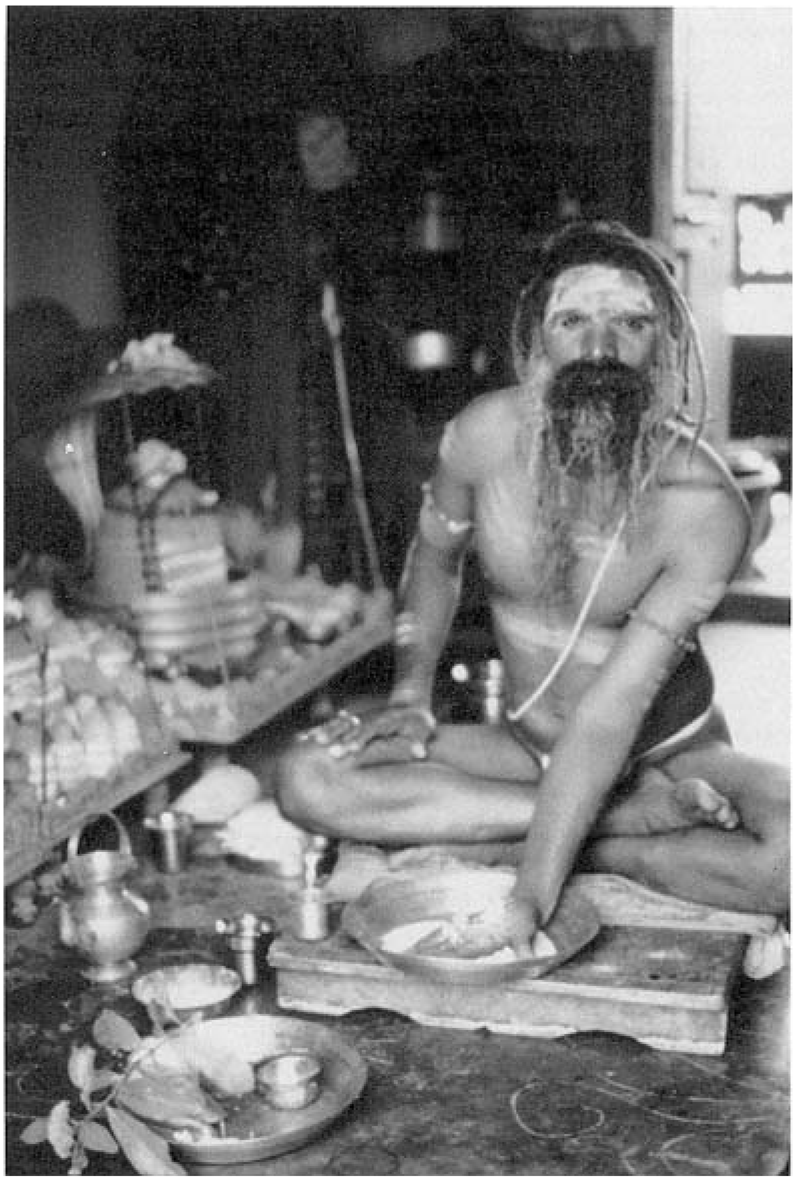
12. A lorry mechanic from the Shepherd caste dances for three nights on (*Maha*-) *Sivaratri*, trident in hand and matted locks flying like Virabhadra-Siva. He is possessed by the spirit of his elder brother who died 52 years ago. Photo courtesy of Chelluboyina Apparao.

His worldview is a process of conscious refining: he has adopted Sanskrit terminology, thought, goals, and divested his belief system and daily practice of many local customs and outlooks. He wears the sacred thread (although a Sudra) and has taught about a dozen people; many, he says, are afraid of the rigorous discipline he demands. His daily pujas include not only worship of the giant ash-fruit of his elder brother and the collective smaller ones, but also other rituals of great length and power, with Sanskrit mantras throughout, all from memory (see plate 13). Following two hours of worship he meditates for another hour before beginning his day's work. The intensity of his religious life has recently increased: although still of vigorous build, he fasts routinely; he and his wife observe *brahmacarya*;his matted locks remain uncut; a long while on the threshold, he appears now to be closer to the entouage of Siva-Virabhadra-Bhadrakali than the world of householders and ailing lorries. 14

D. Some Interpretations

The cult that we are considering focuses upon the human tragedy of infant and child loss. How does it reply to this devastation, surely one of the darkest of imponderable events in the human experience? The structure of the response is

multiform, including first and foremost detailed ritual activities, both emotion-charged and cathartic (the nocturnal procession), and routine methodic (the home or temple pujas). Second, the response is empathic and consolatory: the deceased child is not erased but remains a part of the family, the household, and the major events of its life. An iconic presence assures continuous communication for as long as the family cares to remember and include the deceased. Third, some living family members may actually be initiated and empowered by this painful event. They become, by possessions in the processions, "something more," ganacaris, part of Siva-Virabhadra's closest entourage, part of the Army of God in the mythic context. They are conduits of messages from the spiritual world, momentary embodiments of the spirits *and* of the god; not only are they in contact with avataras such as Sarabha or Virabhadra, but in a sense they are temporary avataras themselves during these minipilgrimages in the halfworld between one day and the next, between home and the river-frontier. Fourth, the cult opens up the response to a wider focus and gains mythic charter by recourse to paradigms of sacred violence, rage employed by supernatural powers to redress wrongful actions. And here the cult perceives wrongful action in two



13. The same lorry mechanic in daily morning pujas, largely in Sanskrit, including extensive worship of the ash-fruits representing his brother (at left rear, under the brass serpent hoods). Photo by David Knipe.

dimensions, the overt, immediate action, the death out of order that threatens the family, and the covert, hidden action, the Brahmanic exclusiveness that threatens the median-rank caste groups, the Sudras. In its own eclectic way the cult is an answer to the age-old, locally apparent exclusion of non-Brahmans from the vaidika soma rituals, and the exclusion of Sudras and others from the *antyesti*,sraddha, and related death rituals of the privileged twice-born castes. Finally, the cult is not only a means of participating in uncontrollable divine/ demonic rage, but also of limiting that power. It is, of course, the rituals, all of them, that keep the lid on, and provide a local manifestation of the restoration, eulogy, and subsequent harmony that conclude the nights of rage on the cosmic scale of the Puranas. The demons that disrupt and subvert the cultural order are organized, restrained, and replaced in the jurisdiction of rites and their results. 15

Viewed from this widening perspective then, the cult is more than a statement about the death of a child: it is a review of Hindu eschatology.

There is space here to examine in detail only a single aspect of this energetic and symbol-rich confrontation with the enigma of child death. Let us observe more closely the iconic presence of the deceased. At the center of the Virabhadra cultprocession, temple, or home shrineis the vibhuti-pandu. It is a simple, dull gray item and a rich, colorful, multifaceted symbol. To the Shepherd lorry mechanic with his goal of brahmajñana and his Sanskrit *mantras* and pujas, the object is first of all a linga of Siva and the presence of Mahadeva. To the young mother the object is first of all a virabhadra, one of the hundreds in the town, but unlike all the others in that it is her son of eighteen months/nine years. And in the context of the Snake-anthill temple, with its chthonic, womblike darkness dominated by the self-arisen mound of the anthill, and its forceful figures of goddesses shining in lamplight, multiple powers are manifest. Not least of them are the manifold, restful, temporarily satisfied dead. We are in the presence of something perhaps far older than the Rudra-Siva and Saivism known to us from textual traditions.

The Ash

The name of the icon is revealing: ash-fruit. In Vedic Hinduism ashes are what we all become; they are the remnants of the sacred fires of our lives.16 There is the beautiful Vedic prayer in the *Vajasaneyisamhita* (40.15) declared by a dying person, "Now my breath is the immortal wind, my body is ashes (*bhasman*)."Ashes are the evidence of

sacrifice, proof that a powerful transaction has been accomplished, and the material sign of purification, healing, renunciation, and transformation. Consistent with the notion of life as continuous sacrifice, ashes become in Hindu symbolism both remnants of old existence and seeds of new creation. 17 Ashes (bhasman) smeared on the erect phallus of Siva are mentioned in the *Mahabharata*,18and a primary manifestation of the god (and therefore of his renunciant devotee, the *yogin*)is a body smeared with the ashes of the dead. But another ash, that of cowdung in particular, became important to Vaisnavas as well as Saivas: *vibhuti*,literally, a manifestation of power, development, expansion, became a favored term. This literal meaning is an accurate definition of the ash-fruit. Myths trading on classical Sanskrit and Tamil homologies between ash and semen, blood, or bone were augmented by regional folkloric accounts of the revival of heroes from their ashes, particularly by bathing them in a sacred river. From the Brahmanic distribution of charred bone fragments into the river within a year after cremation, to the popular Puranic tale of the evil man who attained *moksa* because a crow accidentally dropped one of his bones in the Ganges, we find a context for the regenerated remnant, the ash-fruit, at the end of its annual pilgrimage, bathed in the Godavari River.

The ashes of cowdung pressed into vibhuti-pandus or goddess figurines represent those who are not burned. They are the icons primarily of median ranks in this area of coastal Andhrafrom Shepherds and Potters to Weaversand for many of these groups burial is standard disposal of the dead. In the context of the Virabhadra cult, the icon may represent one who could not be burned even if the Brahmanic code were adopted. It is possible that the sacredness of cowdung ash is a deep-seated concept of pastoralists in South India in its own right, apart from the significance of the ashes of cremation. Archeological evidence of great mounds of cowdung ash in the southern Deccan (Karnataka) indicates that seminomadic pastoralists periodically conducted massive conflagrations over their cattle-corrals and stockade-like habitats, perhaps ritually in connection with seasonal migrations to new grazing areas, and with mythic/symbolic connotations of

regeneration. This evidence of cowdung ash-mounds takes us to circa 3000 BCE.19

The Fruit

The other half of the name for the icon is the Telugu word for fruit, pandu, and here again there is graphic interplay of classical and regional Hindu expressions. In this Andhra tradition the deceased is understood

still to be growing, ripening as a result of offerings and familial attentions. In the perspective of classical tradition and the doctrines of samsara and karma, the deceased is also, like ashes, the result (*phala*,"fruit") of action, the sum total of a life now sacrificed as final offering (antyesti). Furthermore, in the classical funerary and sraddha (ancestral offering) traditions the deceased is represented in the context of the Fathers by three *pindas*,and those three balls, representing both the presence of the Fathers and food offerings to them, 20 are sometimes described as three fruits, the *kapittha*, *amalaka*,and inner coconut. These three graded sizes of rice-balls called "fruits" remind us that the Potters of Rajahmundrynot the Brahmans, who in theory disown this ritecreate three sizes of ash-fruits named after the three measures for rice. The homophony Sanskrit pinda/Telugu pandu is perhaps not lost in popular etymology and perception. We recall that there should be three of the vibhuti-pandus in procession (even though only one in the temple or home shrine): riverside pujas to these three could be seen as one counterpart to Brahmanic *tripindi-sraddha* ceremonies performed at this same ghat. In any event, the two icons, pandu and pinda, illuminate one another suggestively in their uniform/triform symbolism, and their connections with rice and fruit, both motifs of rebirth: "it/ they" are simultaneously offering and recipient, a circular system-in-itself energized in Andhra in the liminality of an annual procession. The iconically declared ambiguity of "the fruit of ashes" is appropriate for those who do not recycle and have no issue, and at the same time consistent with normative Hinduism in which *everything* is the result of an offering (an eating), about to be offered (eaten) by something new (eater). In this symbol the something new (eater) is the something old (eaten), perhaps yet another way of remarking the untimely dead as vividly enclosed by an idiom set apart.

Ash-fruits are molded from cowdung ash cemented by a mixture of gum from an acacia, a tree of the mimosa family. Here is an additional symbol of growth and perpetuation, for resin, in the context of both classical and popular belief, is not merely plant juice. It is the essence, life fluid, semen, seed of the tree, its virtuality contributed to this icon of the dead.

The Stone

We should note here that the ash-fruit has the immediate appearance of neither ash nor fruit but stone. It reminds us of the almost universal significance of stone in the history of religions, and of its specific employment in South Asia in connection with the symbolism

of death and the endurance of the human spirit that overcomes death. The upright stone, wide at the base, pointed or rounded at the top, may indeed be one of the most archaic symbols of South Asia. Recent excavators of a terminal upper paleolithic site in Madhya Pradesh tentatively dated 9000-8000 BCE may have identified a shrine built by hunter-gatherers, a platform with a central triangular stone of unique design. Its concentrically triangular interior laminations are entirely familiar to local peoplestribals, caste Hindus, and Muslimswhose current shrines represent goddesses by similar stones on similar platforms. 21

If we were to look for models of the specific rounded cone that is the small stone-like ash-fruit employed in processions, we might turn also to Harappa, where excavations have revealed stones ranging from tiny ones to some more than two feet in height, roughly the same range as the ash-fruits. But we have no explanation of their meanings in prehistoric Harappa. It is the multitude of mounds and rounded conical stones, in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, for example, that speak from living cults of the deified dead; the *pind*, *stup*,or *thuha* is established on a raised platform to represent a powerful spirit such as that of a Brahman or hero who has suffered an untimely, often violent death. These are the *brahm* and bir (from Sanskrit *vira*)stones, respectively.22 They can be the size of the largest of ash-fruits, or sometimes much bigger. Counterparts are known from many regional cults of the dead, for example, the collective ancestral stones of the

Kannada-speaking Coorgs of Mysore, embedded in earthen platforms, and their bira hero stones.23 The astonishing variety of hero and memorial stones connected with cults of the dead in South Asia is now the subject of regional and integral studies.24

Even great architectural monuments ca be reduced to the scale of the ash-fruits. The relief sculptures of such ancient Buddhist sites as Amaravati on the Krishna River, only a hundred miles west of Rajahmundry, display stupas in miniature with worshippers, usually female, bending over or before them in namaskara. These second-century BCE reliefs of tiny stupas are arresting for several reasons: their parabolic shapes, like many ash-fruits but unlike the classical Siva-lingas either on the Amaravati reliefs themselves or in contemporary Siva temples in Andhra; an uncanny resemblance of the stupas decorated with three encircling garlands to the ash-fruits undergoing pujas with their three encircling vermilion stripes; the appearance of the mini-stipas either singly, or in triads, again like the ash-fruits; the prominence of women in their worship. It is well known that stupas

are Buddhist reliquaries perpetuating older cults of the dead, and also that in the history of Andhra religion there was considerable interplay between vaidika, Buddhist, Jaina, Saiva, and other traditions of death and rebirth.

But more important for our topic is the widespread tradition in Hindu funerary customs of using a small triangular or round stone (*sila* or *asman* in the Sanskrit *paddhatis* and many vernaculars) to strike three holes in a large water pot held on the left shoulder of the chief mourner, allowing nourishing water to flow on the pyre or grave. This (or another) small portable stone can then become an icon of the deceased in post-cremation/burial ceremonies during his perilous journey as spirit (*preta*)to the other world and eventual incorporation into the company of ancestors (pitrs). As such, it is the recipient of offerings, and food in particular, during the ten-day period of ritual reconstruction of a temporary body for the deceased. A wider complex of symbols and surrogates during this period of gestation and rebirth (which is also a symbolic year) includes not only the stone (which survives today mostly in the Deccan) but also a small, dripping water pot, a pipal tree, a piece of cloth from the deceased, and a ritualist stand-in who eats the food offerings intended to nourish the deceased during his journey. Here is perhaps one of the oldest living belief-systems in India, the dead represented by stones (and sometimes ritual specialists as backup surrogates) demanding food in order to remain in existence.

How do we recognize the archaism of this belief? We have noted the congruence of three factors in the Virabhadra cult of the dead: the deceased are represented by ash-fruits that are stone-like, they are satisfied if their kin attend to them with pujas that include food offerings, and because of these offerings and attentions by the family they continue to grow. Stones believed to grow from the ground because they are bathed and fed by worshippers, particularly women, are known from all parts of India North and South. 25 But it is Elwin who reported from his years of research among the Muria tribals of the Bastar plateau in Madhya Pradesh the universal Muria belief that memorial stones for the buried dead, whether slender squared-off *menhirs* eight feet tall or small phallus-like ones only a foot high (shown in his plates 31 and 34)

> grow in size if the soul of the dead is satisfied with the arrangements that are made for him. . . . A very small stone is put for a baby and it is believed that it will grow gradually until it has reached the size it should have been placed for a man of twenty.26

Here we have the recognition of the child-spirit whose development continues in the midst of the living. Even the ancient megaliths of the region are explained as *very old* because no one could have set up such huge stones. The Muria bathe their memorial stones after setting them upright, place marks of oil and turmeric on them, then set food (including rice) before them, and sacrifice a cow or bullock, tying the tail to the menhir of the deceased.

Several significant pan-Indian concepts concerning the dead begin to fall into place when we recognize certain homologies. First, the central religious fact about cults of the dead in South Asia, classical or folk, is continued ritual offering of food and water. Of all ritual attentions to the dead, food, usually cooked food, and most frequently rice, is the necessary and most significant offering. This food as a lump or heap (like rice) can be, simultaneously, the offering and

its destination, the deceased.

Second, conical or rounded stones, as well as small triangular ones, can represent the deceased (or the ancestors collectively) and receive the food and water offerings. Furthermore, these stones can be equated to the food-becoming-spirit, for example, the same word *pind* labeling both stone and offering in Hindi (above) and Marathi, 27 or the stone-like, pinda-like Telugu fruit, pandu, of the Virabhadra tradition.

Third, the powerful disgruntled dead, a category that must include those cheated of a full life span (*ayus*),such as Brahmans who met violent ends, heroes (viras) both martial and spiritual, children who never completed the basic passage to marriage, all undergo deification and are commemorated in stone. Speaking theologically, this multifaceted subcontinental cult of the dead is flexible enough to lend itself in the direction either of a goddess, with all of her natural connections to the earth, the earth-mound, the cave, and rebirth, or to the great male lord of the cremation and burial grounds, namely Siva. In certain instances we can observe that historically the latter has taken over the former. Speaking lithically, the stones of the deceased or collective ancestors can be seen, over time, as similarly directed, the mound-like for the goddess,28 the more phallic, vertical ones participating in the symbols of the god, whose linga is an independent statement of regeneration. Many stones are vague enough to be androgynous, and that too is contextual. Other stones, like the triangular one that penetrates the full water pot, may participate in the fruitful coincidence of opposites, as mirrors of the linga in the yoni, or the multiple turrets of the anthill. Sontheimer has in fact recognized the further extension of the above homologies in the Mhasvad temple

text in which the object embedded in the chamber under the *garbhagrha* is a round stone, the food offering, the embryo in the womb (all signified by Marathi *pind*),a head-offering (from a death by decapitation), and the murti in which the temple deity was originally manifest, therefore the Siva-linga (Marathi *pindi*). 29

Fourth, the routine of ritual feeding advances the spirit into spiritual realms less vulnerable for the spirit and less dangerous for the living. In the classical Hindu funeral tradition the complex of stone, tree (or tripod) and water pot, cloth, and surrogate/priest is no longer necessary after the tenth day, and (where it has been retained) the cloth-wrapped stone is tossed into a river. Incongruously, however, from the point of view of the doctrine of samsara, the deceased still continues to require routine offerings of food and water in tradtional sraddhas. On the other hand, for the untimely dead such advancement into celestial realms and eventual rebirth is closed; they have been dealt out of the game and remain fixed in stone. Throughout South Asia this belief endows them with fearsome power.30 What we discern in the expression of the growing stone is thus not the progress of the deceased but vivid testimony to a care and feeding that are inclusive and nutritive.

Fifth, certain ritual specialists may be involved in this process that leads either to stability and control for the untimely dead, or toward eventual rebirth for those who have received an allotted span. Among them are the debased or "ignorant" priest on one hand, and the guardian hero (vira) on the other, two significant and elusive figures in the history of South Asian religions.31 Parts of North India have retained the water-pot and the degraded priest as surrogate, but not the stone, although medieval digests, for example, the *Antyestipaddhati* of Narayana Bhatta's *Prayogaratna*,32have roles for the sila or asman. In Andhra, on the other hand, the water-pot, stone, cloth, and chief mourner are linked, and there are indications of homologies between the surrogate stone and the ritualist for some communities. The chief mourner wears the stone wrapped in a piece of the shroud from the deceased on his person for the ten days, takes it to a river or other water source each day, bathes, cooks food, and offers it with water to the stone.33 My own observations include a small water pot dripping on the stone for ten days, the equivalent of the pot on the tree broken by the Mahabrahmana of North India at the end of this phase.

E. Conclusion

To return to the portable ash-fruits of the cult of Virabhadra and their loci in the temple, the home-shrine, and the annual pilgrimage to the river, we must recall attention to the center of the tradition, the snake-anthill. However significant ash,

fruit, rice, tree, stone, earth, embryo, phallus, and other substances may be as "natural" models with symbolic impact, it is clear from their placement among the multiple turrets of the anthill that ash-fruits replicate these self-existent signs. Hinduism has a fascination for that which is self-arisen (*svayambhu*)and appears by itself (e.g., Telugu *veliyu*).Many (most) things can become divine, but what is self-manifest has unlimited power in the three worlds. The limitless linga, the axis mundi whose netherworld/upperworld tips can never be found, is present in the goddess, as the ash-fruit grows in the cave-womb-temple, and the female spirit lives in the resident cobras. The ambition is androgynous, conjunctive, all-encompassing. The vibhuti-pandus share in ascension symbolism as dramatically as chthonic disclosures, particularly when lifted with exaggeration onto the heads of the marchers, some of whom later "ascend" in the states of possession and transformation, enthused with the virabhadra of the family, the Virabhadra of the cult, and the lion-faced Sarabha whose roles in this command performance of the raging spirits are to eliminate those established laws and sacrifices that have left them no share. Ahead of the marchers fly the prabhas, the red banners that are ethereal, celestial forms of the linga. Beside them are the drums of terror and the destruction of this world, but also the drums of their salvation and extraction from the night of the growing dead.

Notes

1. My gratitude is extended to M. V. Krishnayya, Reader in the Philosophy Department at Andhra University, Waltair, for his assistance in this project. Raised in the outskirts of Rajahmundry and long familiar with the town, he contributes the energy, insight, and enthusiasm that make this continuing study possible. I also wish to thank my colleague, Velcheru Narayana Rao, as well as Charles Nuckolls and Phillip Wagoner for their comments. Interpretations (and misinterpretations) rest with the author.

2. A. E. Crawley, "Drums and Cymbals," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*,J. Hastings, ed. (New York, 1912), vol. *5*,91, noted that "the music of the drum is more closely connected with the foundations of aurally generated emotion than that of any other instrument. It is complete enough in itself to cover the whole range of human feeling. . . ."

3. Thurston's notes on the Viramustis of Vishakhapatnam District at the turn of the century suggest coherence of several caste groups including the Viramustis, Devangas, Komatis, and Jangams, all more or less participant in the Lingayat (Virasaiva) tradition. See Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*,7 vols. (Madras 1909), vol. 7, 406-11. This coherence is only partly visible now in East Godavari District.

4. John C. Irwin, "The Sacred Anthill and the Cult of the Primordial Mound," *History of Religions* 21 (1982), 348.

5.David M. Knipe, "The Temple in Image and Reality," in Michael V. Fox, ed., *Temple and Society* (Winona Lake, Indiana 1987), plate 1.

6. David Shulman, "The Serpent and the Sacrifice: An Anthill Myth from Tiruvarur," *History of Religions* 18 (1978), 114, identifies this anthill-born rainbow with Vedic myths of the bowstring that decapitates Visnu, opposite number of Siva as well as "the sacrifice," and he adroitly connects this motif with the Daksayajña, Dadhyañc, and other myths in Vedic and Tamil texts concerning the removal and subsequent restoration of the head of the sacrifice.

7. Locations of the myth of Daksa's sacrifice in the *Mahabharata*, *Harivamsa*,and seven Puranas are cited in Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle*: *Krishna in the Mahabharata*,(Ithaca, N. Y. 1976), 314, n. 45. In addition to Hiltebeitel (idem, pp. 312-35) recent perceptive discussions, each with a different emphasis, include Diana L. Eck, "The Sacrifice of Daksa and the Sakta Pithas," paper presented at the American Academy of Religion annual meeting, Atlanta, 1986; Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "Dionysus and Siva: Parallel Patterns in Two Pairs of Myths," *History of Religions* 20 (1980), 96ff., and *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva* (London 1973), 128 ff.; Stella Kramrisch, *The Presence of Siva* (Princeton 1981), 322 ff.; Shulman, "Serpent and the Sacrifice," 122 ff.; and J. Bruce Long, "Daksa: Divine Embodiment of Creative Skill," *History of Religions* 17 (1977), 29 ff.

8. Edited by Jvalaprasada Misra (Muradabad 1965); cf. ET ed. by J. L. Shastri, 4 vols. (Delhi 1969-70). Problems of the text of "the Siva Purana" are beyond the scope of this paper, but there are numerous Sanskrit editions available and no two appear to be identical in contents.

9. Hiltebeitel, *Ritual of Battle*,312-35, identified numerous parallels between the night raid by Asvatthaman, inspired by

Siva (in the *Sauptikaparvan* of the *Mahabharata*),and the attack on Daksa's sacrifice. Among the most intriguing of these from the perspective of this essay is the theme of the apparent destruction of the lineage, with the deaths of the Draupadeyas, sons of the five Pandavas, at the hands of the "child-slaying" Asvatthaman. Of interest also

is Hiltebeitel's subsequent discussion in "Siva, the Goddess, and the Disguises of the Pandavas and Draupadi," *History of Religions* 20 (1980), 147-74, of the Draupadi cult enacting Tamil versions of the epic both as ritual and all-night performance in the so-called "street-dramas" (Tamil *terukkuttu*),the Vanniyars providing most of the actors. "They are *sudras* who view themselves as *ksatriyas*,as it were in a disguise forced upon them by history" (p. 169). Described in this article is another epic figure, Arjuna, disguised an an androgyne in Siva's *ardhanarisvara* mode, including the anklets and epaulettes that we have observed in the viramustis, and behaving as a eunuch-transvestite.

10. The photograph of a Viramusti published in Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*,vol. 7, 409, shows a middle-aged man with upraised sword in guardian pose wearing a studded headband, *rudraksa* beads, a warrior's embossed metal belt and, suspended from his belt below the waist, three brass masks, the center one over his abdominal-genital area showing a lion like that in the Snake-anthill temple today, and the two flanking it showing Siva and the goddess.

11. The *sarabha rupa* (monster-form) of Siva, appears to be conflated with the bhairava rupa (Virabhadra) in the Rajahmundry cult and its symbols, as indeed it is in the *Siva-Purana* (and in other texts; cf. Jan Gonda, *Visnuism and Sivaism*. *A Comparison* [London 1970], 106f.). The *Satarudra-samhita* of the Purana (11-12) accounts for the origin of the thousand-handed, lion-faced monster with wings and matted locks of hair who dispatches the man-lion, Narasimha, and removes both his head and hide for Siva to wear from that moment on. As with the Daksa sacrifice myth elsewhere in this same Purana there is direct single combat between avataras of Siva and Visnu, concurrent distinction between a battle and pralaya, subordination and co-option of the sacrifice via the decapitation of Visnu and Siva's self-investment with the body of the man-lion. This Saiva conquest is all the more effective in that Narasimha is the Vaisnava paradigm of rage, counterpart to Virabhadra. The *Siva Purana* reference to Siva wearing the (lion) head of Narasimha raises an intriguing speculation: the lion mask (head) on the arch over the anthill, and the lion mask over the genitals of Thurston's Vuramusi (n. 10), may not be Sarabha after all, but Narasimha. A mid-thirteenth century inscription from Malkapurum (Guntur District) refers to Siva temple and village guardian-warriors known as viramustis and virabhadras. The latter (and possibly the former as well) protected their charges by acts of decapitation, castration, and disembowelment, evidently self-inflicted; see Philip B. Wagoner, "The Hero Stones of Andhra," unpublished manuscript, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1984. These self-immolated viras evidently remained at their posts, so to speak, in the form of memorial stones of great power, not unlike sati stones.

12. In other districts of Andhra, I am told, such prabhas can be thirty or more feet in height, drawn in processions on bullock carts and steadied with guy wires. Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam, in her article in this volume, mentions the cosmogonic new year festival performance in Bhaktapur, Nepal, in which Bhairava is erected as linga, a cross-shaped pole bearing two long

cloth banners. Not only does this description match the two prabhas of the Rajahmundry tradition, but in Bhaktapur the two banners represent the two serpents from which the festival, Bisket Jatra, is named. We recall that the Rajahmundry snake-anthill, where the banners are housed, is the residence of two serpents.

13. The folk epic of the virgin goddess Kanyaka, whose center is Penugonda in West Godavari District, across the river from Rajahmundry, is summarized and discussed by Velcheru Narayana Rao, "Epics and Ideologies: Six Telugu Folk Epics," in Stuart H. Blackburn and A. K. Ramanujan, eds., *Another Harmony*. *Essays on the Folklore of India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1986), 131 ff. In a caste intrigue, to protect her Komati (trading caste) kin, she sacrifices herself in a fire-pit (like Sati). Further, in the secondary epic, as the oral Telugu *katha* was transformed into a written Sanskrit Purana, Kanyaka was identified (again like Sati) with Parvati. Both versions revolve around the perpetuation of caste, *gotra*,and family lineages. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*,vol. 7, p. 409 refers to Kanyaka as Vasavakanya and Kanyakamma; the last name is used in Rajahmundry for Virakanyaka as well.

14. In several respects the lorry mechanic has moved into a role similar to that of the god-dancer (camiyati) of Tamilnadu, as described, among others, by Stephen Inglis, "Possession and Pottery: Serving the Divine in a South Indian Community," in Joanne Punzo Waghorne and Norman Cutler, eds., *Gods of Flesh/Gods of Stone*. *The Embodiment of Divinity in India* (Chambersburg, Pa. 1985), 89-102. Inglis' account of processions by the Velar potters of Madurai District contains other points of interest: the Velars make clay images for the festivals, as the Rajahmundry potters make the ash fruits (the latter, however, are musicians, but are neither pujaris nor among the possessed, as are the Velars); in the procession a Velar camiyati carries on his head a box containing puja materials.

15. Cf. Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons*: *Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka* (Bloomington, Indiana 1983), 104.

16. David M. Knipe, *In the Image of Fire* (Delhi 1975), 132-37.

17. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "The Symbolism of Ashes in the Mythology of Siva," *Purana* 13 (1971), 28.

18. Ibid., 35.

19. Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Rise of Civilization in India and Pakistan* (Cambridge, England 1982), 122-25.

20. David M. Knipe, "Sapindikarana: The Hindu Rite of Entry into Heaven," in Frank E. Reynolds and Earle H. Waugh, *Religious Encounters with Death*: *Insights from the History and Anthropology of Religions* (University Park and London 1977), 117 ff.

21. See J. M. Kenoyer, J. D. Clark, J. N. Pal, and G. R. Sharma, "An Upper Paleolithic Shrine in India?" *Antiquity* 57 (1983), 88-94. The site is Baghor I in Sidhi District. Acquired from an escarpment two or three kilometers from the

site, the stone is 15 cm. high, about the median height (six inches) of the standard processional vibhuti-pandus. It is, however, the interior set of laminations, roughly half the height of the Baghor I stone, that most resemble the exterior contour of the man-made ash-fruits.

22. See Diane M. Coccari, "The Bir Babas of Banaras: An Analysis of a Folk Deity in North Indian Hinduism," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1986, 29 ff., 149 ff., and plates; Jack M. Planalp, "Religious Life and Thought in a North Indian Village," Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1956, 774 ff.

23. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India* (Bombay 1952), 160 ff.

24. E.g., Coccari, "Bir Babas"; Wagoner, "Hero Stones of Andhra"; S. Settar and Günther D. Sontheimer, eds., *Memorial Stones* (Dharwar-Delhi 1982); Romila Thapar, "Death and the Hero," in S. C. Humphreys and Helen King, *Mortality and Immortality*: *The Anthropology and Archaeology of Death* (London 1981); Eberhard Fischer and Haku Shah, Vetra ne khambha*Memorials for the Dead* (Ahmedabad 1973); W. G. Archer, *Vertical Man*. *A Study in Primitive Indian Sculpture* (London 1947).

25. E.g., Planalp, "Religious Life and Thought," 779; K. Sanjiva Prabhu, *Special Study Report on Bhuta Cult in South Kanara District*, *Census of India*,1971, Mysore Series 14, Miscellaneous (a) (Delhi 1977), 59, with thanks to Alf Hiltebeitel for the latter reference.

26. Verrier Elwin, *The Muria and their Ghotul* (London 1947), 141.

27. Günther D. Sontheimer, *Biroba*, *Mhaskoba und Khandoba*: *Ursprung*, *Geschichte und Umwelt von pastoralen Gottheiten in Maharastra* (Wiesbaden 1976), 27f.

28. The *bhavanis* of a village in eastern Uttar Pradesh described by Planalp, "Religious Life and Thought," pp. 757, 920, are the spirits of girls killed by *bhuts*,aborted fetuses, victims of infanticide or other unusual death, and can be represented inside the house by small mounds or altars of clay. Originally considered malevolent, they can be incorporated into the family as tutelary deities, benign and protective except when angered. Bhavani is the benign consort of Siva, equivalent to Parvati. Bhavani as anthill goddess is depicted in the photo of the anthill temple of Periyapalayam,

Tamilnadu (see Irwin, "Sacred Anthill," fig. 3; cf. fig. 1), striking confirmation of a feminine correspondence involving child spirit/goddess/anthill.

29. Sontheimer, *Biroba*, *Mhaskoba und Khandoba*,26 ff.

30. See Stuart H. Blackburn, "Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism," *History of Religions* 24 (1985), 261 ff.

31. These two figures appear in discussions by other authors in this volume, and in particular the study by Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam. The complicated relationships between Bhairava, Biroba (cf. Sontheimer, *Biroba*, *Mhaskoba und Khandoba*),Virabhadra, Potu Raju, Jagannatha, and other deities, as well as themes of decapitation, self-sacrifice, and multiform goddesses and heroines,

will no doubt be subjects of continuing study. On the Mahabrahmana (Mahapatra), see Jonathan Parry, "Ghosts, Greed and Sin: The Occupational Identity of the Benares Funeral Priests," *Man* (n.s.) 15 (1980), 88-111, and my own remarks ("Sapindikarana," pp. 116 f.; "Stalking the Sacrifice," *Journal of Asian Studies* 45 [1986], *355-58*),the latter in connection with the "ignorant Brahman," Fritz Staal's term for the *avidvan* in certain Vedic rituals. For the Mahabrahmana in action in Banaras, see "Death and Rebirth in Hinduism," Program 15 of my video series, Exploring Religion in South Asia (Madison 1975). A remarkable parallel to the Mahabrahmana's ritual role in Banaras, which reaches a climax in his seemingly insatiable demand for food, an entire year's supply, on the eleventh day after the death of the one for whom he is surrogate, occurs in A. C. Bouquet, "Beliefs and Practices of the Jalaris in the Matter of Life Beyond the Grave," *Numen* 7(1960), 205. Bouquet witnessed in a village of Jalaris, fishers of coastal Andhra, a performance by one of "the dasullu" (the Dasarulu, Mala [Harijan] Vaisnava singers and performers; cf. Gene H. Roghair, *The Epic of Palnadu*: *A Study and Translation of the Palnati Virula Katha* [London 1982], 35f.). This "necromancer," as Bouquet labeled him, spoke for the dead when a small stone was seen to move. The spirit demanded "all types of meat, onions, chillies, coconuts, bread, liquor, etc." and got "a pretty good haul."

32. Ed. by Vasudeva Sharma, 2d ed. (Bombay 1937).

33. J. E. Padfield, *The Hindu at Home* (Madras 1908), 201 ff.

6
Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide: The Problem of the Mahabrahmana 1

A post-structuralist hermeneutic of Hindu mythico-ritual discourse based on the phenomenology of Transgressive Sacrality*

Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam

Bhairava, terrifying aspect of Siva, is the god of transgression par excellence, for he appears only to cut off the fifth head of Brahma, Brahmanicide being the most heinous crime in the Hindu tradition.2 Yet Bhairava's example was ritually imitated by the gruesome Kapalika ascetics, who still have their successors in the modern Aghoris and Naths, who have greatly contributed to the spread of his cult.3 To this day, there are isolated reports in the newspapers of human sacrifices being offered to such terrifying divinities as Bhairava and his female consort Bhairavi for the attainment of magical powers; and the undying force of the imagery surrounding them in the Hindu psyche is testified to by its vivid exploitation in contemporary cinema.4 In Nepal, as in Bali, he is identified with the bloody epic hero Bhimasena, whose acts of sacrificial slaughter are given a tantric interpretation, while his wife Draupadi is identified with Bhairavi, and their joint cult is very popular among the Newars.5 Unlike most other Hindu divinities he enjoys a folk cult that extends to various tribal communities on the periphery of or even beyond the Hindu cultural universe, and has conversely been instrumental in the "Hinduization" of bloody tribal divinities.6

At the same time, in his eightfold manifestation he also presides,

*For Sunthar

either alone or paired as consort with the eight mother goddesses, over the spatio-ritual organization of sacred cities like Varanasi. In this centre of Hindu culture, Bhairava reigns as the policeman-magistrate (kotwal), to whom pilgrims swarming in from the furthest reaches of the subcontinent must necessarily pay obeisance. 7 In Nepal he is practically the national god of many festivals, so much so that Akash Bhairab has been adopted as the emblem of the Royal Nepali Airlines, and the spatio-ritual organization, although modelled on ancient Kasi, is far better preserved in Bhaktapur.8 He plays a central role during Dasain not only in the *Nava Durga* dances, which dynamically reintegrate the socio-religious community in its spatial extension, particularly in Hindu Bhaktapur, but also in Buddhist Patan, where the *Astamatrka* dance is performed in more pacific fashion by young Sakya (Buddhist) boys.9 Though historically a late divinity, he plays a central role in cosmogonic New Year festivals deriving from an archaic Vedic model, like the Indra-Jatra of Kathmandu (see n. 94), and he appears as the axis mundi or primordial world-pillar in the Bisket Jatra of Bhatkapur (see n. 92). In one such festival, the Nuwakot Bhairavi Rath Jatra, he incarnates himself for the sake of the community and its renewal in the hereditary function of the *dhami*,through whom he participates in bloody rites culminating in oracles before the king's representative for the whole of Nepal (see n. 135). Not only was he worshipped by dynasties of kings and is himself attributed royal traits or identified with the Hindu king, but his very Brahmanicide is only a legacy of the king of gods, Indra's decapitation of his royal chaplain (purohita) Visvarupa (see nn. 66 and 132). In the Kathmandu festival of Pachali Bhairab, he incarnates himself in an impure low caste dancer once every twelve years to renew the power of the king's sword by ritually exchanging his own sword with the latter (see n. 96). His cult is officiated not only by the semi-Untouchable Kusle house-holders, the successors of the Kapalikas,10 but also by the Brahman Buddhist tantrics called Vajracaryas, the priestly elite of the Buddhist half of the Newar caste society. He has even been adopted by the esoteric currents of Tibetan tantrism and his anthropomorphic images have iconographically and functionally much in common with the Buddhist Samvara, Mahakala, and Yamantaka (see nn. 136-7).

In Jain temples of Varanasi, Ujjain and Rajasthan, he is sometimes simply called "guardian of territorial limits" (ksetrapala) or given a new name, Manabhadra/Manibhadra. Most popular in Rajasthan is the Jaina Nakoda Bhairava who, by drawing Hindu and Jaina pilgrims from all over the state, overshadows even the principal shrine of Parsva-

natha. 11 Bhairava is the typical ksetrapala for the more socio-centrally located pure divinities like Visvanatha in Kasi,12 and also functions as the doorkeeper (*dvarapala*)at the temples of such divinities. Yet there is not only a constant "confusion," if not identification, between the pure central divinity and his impure peripheral bodyguard, but even the Vaisnava Jagannatha of Puri reveals himself, in the Sakta interpretation of his *rajapurohitas*,to be still Bhairava when he unites with Bhairavi in the form of the *devadasi*.13 Although his public worship in the Indian temples is nowadays conducted in a purely innocuous Brahmanical mode, his major temple festival of Bhairavastami is wholly derived from the Brahmanicide myth, all of whose symbolism is strikingly retained in his iconography.14 His vehicle, the dog, with whom he is himself also identified, is the impurest creature of the Hindu bestiary (see n. 126).

The Juna or "Old" Regiment of the militant Dasanami Naga Samnyasins, supposedly organized by Samkaracarya, is also called the Bhairava Akhada and its tutelary deity, though presently Dattatreya, was originally Bhairava. Most of their Madhis or sub-units (*matha* ="monastery") are named after some "-*nath*,"like Aghor-, Sahaj-, Rudranath and, as is also the case for the Kanphatas, the most important thing in the Juna Akhada, some of whose Nagas (the Gudads) also wear ear-rings, is the *dhuni* (continuous fire). Their evident links with the Naths, from whom they are outwardly often indistinguishable, have prompted suggestions that these Dasanamis were originally Kapalikas converted by Samkara.15 The tendency to interpret such phenomena evolutionistically as pointing to Natha origins, however justified, must be balanced by the observation that among the Dasanami Nagas, "there are Siddhas, that is those that have attained supernatural powers, who are always designated Naths."16 As in the case of the relations between the Rudra-Pasupatas and the Bhairava-Kapalikas, also called Mahapasupatas, the historical perspective must itself be replaced within a structural approach to the pantheon and cult system (see nn. 61-2). Apart from the branch Akhada in Haridwar with its

central temple of Ananda Bhairava, the principal headquarters, which is in Varanasi, also houses one of the *astabhairavas*,the Ruru or "Dog" Bhairava at Hanuman Ghat.17

Most significant of all, he has been adopted by the Kashmir Saiva theoreticians, most of them Brahmans, as the supermost expression of the Divine, symbol of a reality more ultimate than even the Brahman of Samkara. Abhinavagupta, the greatest among them, who has provided us the most synthetic perception we have of Brahmanical

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culture, 18 goes so far as to exultantly identify himself with this terrifying Brahmanicide, even tribal, Bhairava.19 It is impossible to do justice to all these diverse and often apparently conflicting aspects of Bhairava within the limits of the present paper.20 Instead I will concentrate on demonstrating, primarily through an analysis of his origin myth, the ideology of transgressive sacrality that forms the very essence of the conception of Bhairava.21

A. The Origin Myth of the Brahmanicide Bhairava

Brahma and Visnu were disputing with each other for the status of supreme God and appealed to the testimony of the four Vedas, which unanimously proclaimed Rudra-Siva as the Ultimate Truth of the Universe. But the disputants were unable to accept that Rudra, endowed with so many revolting symbols of impurity and degradation, could be identical with the Absolute Reality of Brahman. Brahma laughed scornfully: "How could the Brahman, free of all attachment, lustily sport with his wife in the company of his troops of deformed churn-goblins (*pramatha*)?"Rudra's supremacy, however, was finally reconfirmed by the esoteric sound-syllable, Omkara, quintessence of the Veda and most condensed symbol of Brahman, who pointed out that Siva's wife is not adventitious to her husband but, on the contrary, embodies his own blissful essence.22 Just then an immense pillar of flame manifested itself in their midst, within which was recognized the towering figure of the three-eyed Rudra bearing his trident, serpents, and crescent moon. But the fifth head of Brahma taunted him: "I know who you are, Rudra, whom I created from my forehead. Take refuge with me and I will protect you, my son!"

Overflowing with anger, Siva created a blazing Bhairava in human form, addressing this Kalabhairava as "Lord of Time-Death" (*kala*)for he shone like the god of Death: "You are called Bhairava because you are of terrifying features and are capable of supporting the universe. You are called Kala-Bhairava, for even Time-Death is terrified of you."23 He ordered him to chastise Brahma, promising him in return eternal suzerainty over his city of Kasi (Varanasi), the cremation ground of the Hindu universe, where final emancipation is assured. In a trice, Bhairava ripped off Brahma's guilty head with the nail of his left thumb. Seeing this, the terrified Visnu eulogized Siva and devotedly recited his sacred hymns, followed in this by the repentant Brahma. Thereby they gained his protection by realizing and acknowledging the supreme reality of Siva. The severed head immediately stuck to Bhairava's

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hand, where it remained in the form of the skull, destined to serve as his insatiable begging bowl. 24 Enjoining him to honour Visnu and Brahma, Siva then directed Bhairava to roam the world in this beggarly condition to atone for the sin of Brahmanicide. "Show to the world the rite of expiation for removing the sin of Brahmanicide. Beg for alms by resorting to the penitential rite of the skull (*kapalavrata*)."Creating a maiden renowned as "Brahmanicide" (*brahmahatya*),Siva instructed her to relentlessly follow Bhairava everywhere until he reached the holy city of Kasi to which she would have no access.

Observing the Kapalika rite with skull in hand and pursued by the terrible Brahmahatya, Bhairava sported freely, laughing, singing, and dancing with the pramathas. Stealing more than the hearts of all women, even the chaste wives of the Seven Vedic Sages (*saptarsi*)as he passed through the Daru forest, the erotic ascetic arrived at Visnu's door to seek redemption only to find his entry barred by the guard, Visvaksena. Spearing the latter and heaving the corpse of this Brahman on his shoulder, he pressed before Visnu with outstretched begging bowl. Visnu split his forehead vein but the outflowing blood, the only suitable offering, could not fill the skull though it flowed for aeons. When Visnu then tried to dissuade Brahmahatya from tormenting Bhairava, the criminal observed that "beggars are not intoxicated by the alms they receive as (are others) by drinking the wine of worldly honor." Visnu venerated him as the Supreme Being,

untainted by sins like Brahmanicide, and acknowledged that his dependence and degradation were a mere fancy. Before leaving joyously to beg elsewhere, Bhairava reciprocated by recognizing Visnu as his foremost disciple and acknowledged the latter's status as "grantor of boons to all the gods." On arriving at Kasi, Brahmahatya sank into the netherworld, and the holy ground on which the skull fell, freeing Bhairava from his Brahmanicide, came to be known as Kapalamocana. It was on the eighth day (*astami*)in the dark (waning moon) half of the month of Margasirsa that Lord Siva manifested as Bhairava. Ever since, by performing ablution at Kapalamocana one is rid of even the worst sin of *brahmahatya*;and whosoever fasts on this day (Bhairavastami) in front of Kalabhairava (temple at Kasi) and stays awake at night is freed from great sins (see Plate 14).

In the Tamil transposition of the sacred geography of Saiva mythology, the fiery linga appeared in the temple city of Tiruvannamalai to become the sacred red mountain of Arunacala, which ritually reverts to its original form during the Karttika festival when a blazing fire is lit on its summit. The *Lingodbhavamurti* is generally depicted on the



14. Kala Bhairava temple, Varanasi. Kala Bhairava adorned for Sivaratri festival (*Sivaratri srngara*), 16 February 1987. Photo courtesy of N. Gutschow.

western face of the external face of the sanctum of Tamil Saiva temples, with the boar Visnu attempting to fathom its depths and the swan Brahma aspiring likewise in vain after its summit. In the *Kañicimahatmya*,Bhairava spears the demon Antaka ("Death"), who was besieging Kailasa, and fixes his lance on the ground on arriving at Kañci in order to remove Antaka. It formed a pit filled with water, Sulatirtha, where the ceremonies for ancestors are performed on new or full moon days. Bhairava lets Antaka perform ablutions at the Siva-Ganga tank before granting him salvation and Antaka disappears into the Antakesa linga he had erected and adored. Bhairava likewise removes Visvaksena from his lance and returns him to Visnu, before being appointed by Siva as the guardian of Kañci, distributing the blood of the skull to all his ganas. 25 The Tamil Bhairava is released from his skull at Tirukantiyur, "holy site of the (head-) cutting," where the temple of "the Lord of Brahma's decapitation" (*Brahmasirakhandisvara*),in which Brahma and Sarasvati are worshipped beside Siva, refers to Siva-Lingodbhavamurti in this context as "Annamalaiyar." The apparently later temple of "Visnu as liberator of Siva (-Kapalin) from his curse" (*Harasapavimocanaperumal*),with its own Vaisnava version of the Brahmanicide myth, claims that, having released Brahma's greedy skull at Kapalapuskarini (lotus pond) behind the temple by enticing it with "blood" (i.e., turmeric mixed with lime) rice, Visnu directed the kapala to Kasi where its insatiable hunger would be satisfied by offerings of *Narayana-bali* (performed especially for those who die at an inauspicious moment, *pañcaka*).

The original Kala Bhairava temple was located on the banks of the Kapalamocana Tirtha itself, in the Omkaresvara area north of Maidagin, where Bhairava remained as the "Sin-Eater" (*Papabhaksana*)par excellence to devour the accumulated sins of devotees and pilgrims. If the pilgrims to Kasi do not fear death there, this would be because their pilgrimage to the *Mahasmasana* is conceived on the ritual model of Bhairava's own arrival at Kasi for absolution from his terrible sin and his subsequent establishment there. The paradox of Bhairava's scapegoat function even after his "purification" can be explained as a "lawful irregularity" resulting from the two opposing valorizations, diachronically disjoined in the myth, of his transgressive essence; it matches the complementary paradox of the pure Kasi-Visvanatha himself being identified esoterically with the impure criminal Bhairava.

B. The "Supreme Penance" of the Criminal Kapalika-Bhairava

Bhairava's twelve-year wandering as a beggar, bearing Brahma's skull as public testimony to his crime and begging from the seven houses of the Seven Sages in the Daru forest, all of these and other traits, like his exclusion from settlements and inhabiting the cremation grounds, correspond exactly to the prescribed punishment for Brahmanicide in the Brahmanical law books. But whereas in Hindu society such Brahmanicides, even if themselves Brahmans, were treated as horrible outcastes and considered wholly degraded, Bhairava is exalted in the myth as the supreme divinity by Brahma and Visnu, the latter even recognizing that he remains untainted by the sin of Brahmanicide. Although the punishment of Bhairava corresponds perfectly to the norms of Brahmanical orthodoxy, his simultaneous exaltation corresponds rather to the doctrines and practices of the Kapalika ascetics, who took the Brahmanical Bhairava for their divine archetype. Even when themselves not originally Brahmanicides, these Kapalikas performed the Mahavrata or *Great Penance* bearing the skull-bowl and skull-staff (khatvanga) of a Brahman in order to attain the blissful state of spiritual liberation and lordship (*aisvarya*)that confers the eightfold magical powers. 26 Theirs was the "Doctrine of Soma" and, although the term is reinterpreted to suit the later sex-rites of the Tantras, it still retains the central Vedic reference to bodily sexual fluids and their spiritual transformation.27 The Kapalikas experienced the spiritual bliss of Bhairava in the felicity of sexual union induced and enhanced by the partaking of meat and wine.

Cast in the image of his sex partner (Bhairavi), the *maiden* Brahmahatya appears in all her ambiguity, as both his supreme punishment and his sole means of beatification, and imposes a causal connection between the two opposed meanings. The obvious explanation is that the sense of honour and self-respect is the greatest obstacle to spiritual realization, so that the Kapalika's social and moral degradation itself assures his complete surrender to his transcendental aim (Lorenzen, p. 77). But why Brahmanicide? Whereas Bhairava is presented in the myth as undertaking the kapalika vow as punishment in order to expiate his Brahmanicide, the Kapalikas in pursuit of their *supreme penance* have always been associated with human sacrifices (Lorenzen, pp. 85-7). Right from Vedic times, the theory of sacrifice presupposes that the consecrated victim should be defectless, pure and auspicious, and that with the ideal victim being a Brahman, Brahmanicide, or whatever it

symbolizes, would itself be productive of great power. The purifications that the sacrificer had to undergo after the sacrifice moreover resembled the expiation of the criminal, and the diksita was in fact equated to a Brahmanicide. But the sacrificial mechanisms revolved around the identification of the sacrificer, the victim and the divinity, and ultimately offered the sacrificer the means of sacrificing himself to the divinity, but through the mediation of the victim with whom he was symbolically identified. 28 The Kapalikas' practice of sacrificing their own flesh and blood as oblations probably carries the notion of self-sacrifice to its logical conclusions.29

The Brahman in Hindu society conserves his Brahmanhood only through the observance of a multitude of interdictions intended to maintain and accumulate his ritual purity. Not only the other great sins (*mahapataka*)of incest, stealing a Brahman's gold, drinking wine and associating with such an offender, but any, even trivial transgression, voluntary or involuntary, of the norms of ritual purity is assimilated by the legal codes themselves to a "Brahmanicide." Thus the utilization of the left (impure) instead of the right (pure) hand during the ritual procedures of eating, dropping of hair or fingernails into one's food, splashing of saliva (Bhairava is sometimes described as "drooling-tongued" *lalajjihva*),intercourse with low caste women, and so on, are all productive of "Brahmanicide."30 That the decapitation also symbolizes the reversal of Brahmanical purity and the disguised valorization of ritual impurity is confirmed by Bhairava's execution of this transgressive act par excellence with his *left* thumb-*nail*,a trivial detail otherwise unduly emphasized in the myth. If Bhairava could have been so widely adopted with all his Kapalika attributes by other left hand currents of Tantrism like the Kaulas and later Naths, who, however, did not imitate the Kapalika model literally, this would be due to the wider application of the Brahmanicide image to their own transgressive exploitation of disgusting ritual impurities in order to attain Bhairava-Consciousness. Bhairava's beheading of Brahma's fifth head is indeed symbolic of *all* manner of transgressions of the norms of classical Brahmanism and it is in this sense that it is "symbolical for the emergence of the Tantra-influenced period in Hinduism." (Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*,p. 66; see n. 22).

From a sociologizing angle, it could be asserted that the five-headed Brahma represents the fourfold Brahma-Veda with the central fifth head transcending the ritual plane to correspond to the Brahma-Absolute of the renunciate samnyasins, still close to Brahmanical orthodoxy in their concern for purity and self-control. For according to one

version of this mythical corpus, Brahma grew his four heads because, filled with incestuous desire, he did not want to lose sight of his daughter as she performed a ritual circumambulation of him. Then, being ashamed, he sprouted the fifth head bearing the traits of an ascetic above the other four (Kramrisch, pp. 251-2; see n. 2). The opposition between this fifth head born of shame and the shameless Bhairava would then be the confrontation between two conceptions of the supreme divinity, two modes of renunciation, that of the orthodox Brahman samnyasin and that of the transgressive Saivite ascetic in his hedonistic exploitation of extreme impurities. 31 The correctness of this interpretation may be judged by the transposition of the mythical beheading, with no alteration in the basic structure but reinforced by philosophical debate, into the legendary accounts of the *advaitin* Samkaracarya's (abortive) decapitation by the Kapalika "Fierce" (Ugra-) Bhairava in the textual traditions of both the opposing currents of renunciation. In both cases, Samkara's non-dualistic Vedantic doctrines of the unreality of the world or of the superiority of inaction (nonperformance of rites) is turned against its own author who, in a dilemma, is compelled to voluntarily offer his head to Ugra-Bhairava. In the tradition of Gorakhnath, in many ways a deradicalized prolongation of the Kapalika current, Ugra-Bhairava opposes Samkara's non-dualism with his own Absolute that is "beyond both dualism and non-dualism" and finally manifests his true identity as the fierce god Bhairava to behead the detached propounder of the non-dual Brahman and his four disciples; and only then, on being revived, did *true detachment* arise in them (Lorenzen, pp. 31-38; see n. 3).

Using text-critical philological methods, the beheading myth has also been interpreted, on a sectarian basis and from an evolutionistic historical perspective, as reflecting the power-relation between the members of the Hindu trinity and showing how different versions in turn exalt the status of either Brahma, Visnu or Rudra, depending on the Vaisnava or Saiva character of the Purana concerned (Stietencron, "Bhairava," pp. 865-6; see n. 2). What matters here, however, is that the basic structure of the episode has been retained in practically all the versions. If its intention could be reduced to a sectarian exaltation of an extra- or even anti-Brahmanical Bhairava or the deliberate devaluation of the Brahman, there would have been no sense in Siva instructing Bhairava to strictly conform to the Brahmanical legal prescriptions for the expiation of Brahmanicide. The fact that Bhairava scrupulously performs it amounts to a full valorization of the Brahman (=Brahma) as demanded by traditional Hindu society. At the same

time, it could not have been intended to glorify Brahma as such, for the latter clearly admits the supremacy of Bhairava, and even Visnu lauds him as the Supreme Reality despite his outward appearance as a criminal beggar steeped in impurity. The real conflict is rather between the two opposing poles of the sacred, one of interdiction incarnated in the non-violent, chaste, truthful, pure, self-denying classical Brahman and the other of transgression represented by the savage, impure, hedonistic Kapalika-Bhairava who beheads this Brahman or his divinity. The myth in its ambiguous essence reveals the ambivalent compromise between the social point of view which must necessarily condemn Bhairava to be an outcaste heretic criminal and the esoteric valorization of transgressive sacrality that exalts him as the supermost divinity, *both* precisely because he has performed the transgression par excellence in Brahmanical society. Although Bhairava had to publicly proclaim his crime for twelve long years before being absolved of Brahmanicide at the sacred city of Kasi, he was rewarded with suzerainty over this socio-religious centre of Hinduism precisely because he had carried out the order to decapitate Brahma's fifth head. 32

C. The Apollonian Visnu and the Dionysiac Bhairava: Bhakti and Initiatic Hierarchies

Although Visnu, unlike Brahma, is a supreme divinity of the cult of devotion (bhakti) and even of the samnyasin, he still participates in and prolongs the pure, conservative pole of the sacrificial order, universalizing it in the very process of loosening its links with the material reality of the Brahmanical sacrifice as performed by the exclusive *Srotriyas* specializing in its ritual technique. But unlike Visnu and although also a supreme divinity of asceticism and bhakti, Rudra participates in and prolongs the highly impure, violent, and dangerous element that the sacrifice sought to productively manipulate within itself and that it assimilated to all that was destructive and menacing outside the sacrifice.33 This contrast between the two gods of bhakti, in terms of their relative proximity and opposition to the pure sacrificial order (*dharma*)incarnated in the classical Brahman, is very well expressed in the *Kankalamurti* episode where it is the Brahman Visvaksena who stands at the threshold barring the transgressive Bhairava's access to the conservative Visnu. It is by killing Visvaksena, by repeating his Brahmanicide, that Bhairava comes face to face with Visnu, and it is evidently due to this peculiar circumstance of their encounter that the Apollonian Visnu favours the Dionysiac Bhairava in a mode that

is more tantric, more transgressive, than socially orthodox. For blood, like saliva and fingernails, is highly impure. 34 The unwarranted slaying of his faithful Brahman doorkeeper does not at all perturb Visnu, who rather rewards Bhairava in like manner for his violent transgression. In the form of the Man-Lion Narasimha, especially popular with the esoteric Pañcaratras, and also as the equally tantricized Boar Varaha, Visnu does closely approach Bhairava in character, to the point of emerging like Bhairava from the sacrificial (stake-) pillar. The myth then reveals two different, but complementary, faces of the bhakti ideology incarnated in Visnu: an orthodox face linked to Brahmanism and preoccupations with purity, and the other, secret, face turned towards the transgressive valorization of impurity symbolized by Bhairava.35

The same complicity seems to have existed between the Olympian Apollo and Dionysos, the god of transgression in ancient Greece. Not only did the impulsion vivifying the Dionysiac cults come from the Delphic Apollo, but Dionysos himself shared Delphi with Apollo to the point of sometimes appearing to be the real master of the sanctuary, it being claimed that he even preceded Apollo there. Similarly, Thebes has its own sanctuary of Dionysos *Cadmeios* and, although he presents himself as a stranger before his own natal city, the most powerful of the Theban gods is Dionysos, with Apollo, again his accomplice.36 "Apollo wanted this close liaison with his mysterious brother, because their reigns, despite their abrupt opposition, are, however, in reality bound to each other by an eternal tie"; "the Apollonian world cannot exist without the other. That is why it has never refused it recognition" (author's trans.).37 Whereas the royally munificent protector-god Visnu radiates life and prosperity through the politico-religious order deriving from the union of the two highest castes (Biardeau, *L'Hindouisme*,p. 108; see n. 12), the obscure "popular" outcaste destroyer-god Bhairava remains like Dionysos close to the embryonic potentialities of savage nature and death (-in-life) in order to inspire the frenzy of possession that has earned him and his adepts the enduring epithet of "Mad" or *Unmatta* (-Bhairava).38 As executioner-cum-victim, both Bhairava and Dionysos are identified with the phallic sacrificial post

drenched in blood, and the embryogonic dimension of Bhairava's Brahmanicide is not without parallel notations in Dionysos' birth from his dead mother, reflected also in his cult.39

This comparative excursus merely points to the universality of this complementary opposition between the interdictory and transgressive poles of the sacred which is prior to and ultimately quite

independent of the bhakti ideology. From the exoteric socio-religious point of view, Visnu is superior to Bhairava, who is no more than the terrible policeman-god protecting the boundaries of the socio-religious community and, as doorkeeper, the access to its temples from hostile external forces. He preserves the socially central divinity, like Visvanatha in Varanasi, from any direct contact with impure elements which are nevertheless vital for the proper functioning of the social whole. The terrifying divinity of transgression can never become the object of public cult as such, and the only means for him to receive communal worship is by transforming himself into the equally terrifying protector-god for a more central pacific and benign divinity. Thus Kalabhairava's promised suzerainty over Kasi has been translated in reality into his being the policeman-magistrate of Lord Visvanatha. The myth achieves this "conversion" from criminal to kotwal through Bhairava's purification at Kapalamocana tirtha at Kasi. But if the kotwal nevertheless remains there as the scapegoat Sin-Eater par excellence, this is no doubt because even as the criminal Kapalika, he had already transcended both good and evil and always remained untainted by them. 40 Yet the pure central Siva-Visvanatha of Kasi has always been inwardly identified by his priestly vaidika custodians with the transgressive Bhairava of the impure marginal Kapalika ascetics, so much so that until very recently he still received secret tantric worship every morning (*nityapuja*)in the right hand (*daksinacara*)mode with symbolic substitutes of the "five 'M's" (*pañcamakaras*:viz. meat, fish, wine, parched beans, and sexual intercourse), from the pujaris who used to smear themselves with ashes from the cremation ground. And human heads were sacrificed to him in the form of pumpkins at the sacrificial stake (*yupastambha*) *within* the temple. During Kala-Bhairava's birthday on Bhairavastami, he also used to be secretly worshipped as the destructive Samhara-Bhairava, and only on that day, seven different fruit and vegetable juices were mixed together (*saptarasa*)to constitute nectar (*amrta* = Soma), with which the *sivalinga* was bathed before its distribution to devotees. Depending on availability watermelons, jackfruit or coconuts were used instead of pumpkins as substitutes for human heads. It is likely that in much earlier times real blood sacrifices were offered in the temple itself. 41

This should hardly surprise us when, from the esoteric standpoint of transgressive sacrality, Visnu himself recognizes Bhairava as the supreme divinity. Nevertheless, Bhairava himself is anxious to "keep up the appearances," to maintain the distinction between what can be described as the exoteric and esoteric hierarchies, for he

recognizes Visnu's supremacy in the socio-religious domain in exchange for the latter's recognition of his own metaphysical and initiatic supremacy. The collusion between the two corresponds perfectly to the oft-repeated dictum of the Bhairavagamas that one should be a (Bhairava-worshipping) Kaula within, a Saiva without, a Vaisnava in the public assembly (*sabha*), *and* an orthodox vaidika (Brahman) in everyday (ritual) life. 42

D. The Transgressive Fifth Head of Brahma and the Pasupata Ultimate Weapon

The sociologizing approach not only cannot account for Visnu's unorthodox reception of Bhairava but it also fails to do full justice to the symbolic signification of the fifth head of Brahma himself. For the majority of versions characterize this fifth head with transgressive notations that we would rather expect to discover in the Kaula Bhairava. There it is the fifth head, as opposed to Brahma's normal four, which proposed incest to his daughter, who indignantly cursed him to always speak contrarily or bray like a donkey, whereupon the fifth head always spoke evilly and coarsely. Or once when Siva visited, Brahma's four heads praised him, but the fifth made an evil sound provoking Siva to cut it off. Because his four heads were incapable of lying, Brahma had to sprout the fifth head in the form of a she-ass to utter the lie that he had reached the summit of the immeasurable linga. Elsewhere, it is generally gluttonous and characterized by loud malicious laughter.43 All these traits are synonyms insofar as they signify transgression through parallel codes like the sexual, linguistic, animal, moral, alimentary, and aesthetic. Contrary, nonsensical or obscene speech and cacophonous sounds universally signify transgression,44 and that other "Brahman par excellence" (*Mahabrahmana*),the obscene,

gluttonous, laughing Vidusaka of the Sanskrit drama, also comically reveals his hidden transgressive function through such *disfiguring* speech, as his very name implies. The donkey, like the dog, represents the impure outcaste in Vedic symbolism as is evidenced in the ritual prescription for the Brahman-slayer to wear the skin of an ass (or dog).45 And when associated with Brahma or a Brahman, it can only signify transgression. The Vidusaka has a voice resembling that of a donkey and does not hesitate to swear lies by his sacred thread.46 Although in the Head Cutting (*Siraschedaka*)Tantra, Brahma's fifth head subsequently receives esoteric Tantric doctrines from his decapitator,47 and the Vidusaka himself is depicted in open collaboration with the Kaula preceptor

Bhairavavanda, 48 the "Case of the Severed Head"49 was already a Vedic mystery, just as the Vidusaka himself has been derived from Vedic prototypes with the pre-classical initiate (diksita) as prime model.50

All this converges to show that Brahma's fifth head itself represents a crucial dimension of transgressive sacrality in the pre-classical Brahmanical sacrifice whose material reality was slowly eliminated from the classical reworkings of the same. Hence Brahma's invariable portrayal with only four heads in classical iconography, and the occasional chaste purity of the mythical fifth head corresponding to the purificatory function of the classical consecration (*diksa*)as a preparation for the sacrifice proper.51 The transgressive fifth head, however, specifically expresses the values of the pre-classical diksita who was charged with evil, impurity, and a dangerous sacrality during his regression into an embryonic deathly condition before he could be reborn as a Brahman. In his incoherent, abusive obscene speech and through many other such traits, the diksita belonged to the same type as the impure militant, even criminal, Vratya-ascetic, the Vedic predecessor of later "shamanizing" Saiva ascetics like the Kapalikas and (Maha-) Pasupatas, and it has been suggested that the human head beneath the fire altar is a legacy of this consecrated warrior.52 Brahma was originally the Vedic Prajapati and his beheading by Bhairava is in fact the later Hindu version of Rudra piercing his victim Prajapati as the latter, in the form of an antelope, was uniting incestuously with his own daughter. Prajapati is equated with the sacrificer (victim, and the sacrifice) and the diksita during his embryonic regression wears the black antelope skin conferring the *bráhman*.On being pierced, Prajapati or his head became the constellation Mrgasiras, the Antelope's Head (Orion), and so too is Bhairava's appearance celebrated, in his temples, on the eighth day of the month of Margasirsa, Head of the Antelope. The festival of *Bhairavastami* probably corresponds to the celebration of the *Ekastaka* at a time and region when the year began with the first (*pratipada*)lunar day of the dark fortnight of Margasirsa, also called *agrahayana*,the "commencement of the year."53 All these notations reinforce the thesis that Bhairava is in many ways the transposition of the transgressive (royal) diksita.

The magical powers that the Kapalika seeks to attain are themselves symbolized by the Pasupata missile equated with the *Brahmasiras*,or "Head of Brahma," that his left hand bears in the form of the skull bowl to justify his and Siva's appellation of Kapalin.54 The implication is that such powers are unleashed by the violation of fundamental taboos symbolized here by (the decapitation of) Brahma's fifth head.55

In the *Mahabharata*,the only two heroes to wield this ultimate weapon, to be used only in the most extreme circumstances and never against human enemies, are Arjuna-Indra, the exemplary Hindu king, and Asvatthaman, who got it from his father Drona-Brhaspati, the purohita (chaplain) of the gods on earth. 56 Preceptor to both the Pandava-Devas and their Kaurava-Asura cousins, Drona-Brhaspati belonged nevertheless, like his more powerful homologue Sukracarya, to the demoniac camp, and yet remained inwardly partial to his favorite pupil, Arjuna, to whom he finally offered the victorious trophy of his Brahman head.57 The magical power of transgressive rites features in the *Atharvaveda* in which the purohitas specialized, and these Brahmans are credited with the formulation and systematization of the emerging Tantric traditions, so much so that the *Atharvaveda* "was often claimed as the Vedic source of the Tantric tradition and thus the earliest Tantric text '*avant la lettre*'"(Goudriaan, p. 16; cf. p. 30; see n. 22). In one Puranic myth, the Angirasas, already called *vairupa* in Vedic times, are ridiculed for their deformity, and the likewise *virupa* (deformed) Vidusaka is often caricatured as a purohita and pretends to magical powers.

Born of a fusion of Rudra, Anger, Lust, Death, and other terrible substances, Asvatthaman is not only a Brahman, but is further the only and inseparable son of Dronacarya, incarnation of Brhaspati who, even more than Brahma, represents the

values of the brahmán-priest and purohita. It is the death of "Asvatthaman" (the elephant) that makes Drona's decapitation possible, and the terrestrial Rudra's final punishment for misusing the Brahmasiras and his infanticide (*bhrunahatya* = brahmahatya) of the unborn Pariksit is to wander eternally in a condition resembling that of the *bhiksatana*-Bhairava.As soon as he is born, Asvatthaman neighs like a horse and his very name (*Asva*-)refers to the horse; and Brahma's fifth head was also a horse's head, that which in the Vedic esotericism alone knew the secret of the hidden Agni and Soma.58 Because it is the Brahman who wields this power by transgressing, under exceptional circumstances, the very taboos that have made him a Brahman, it is not surprising that Rudra, the transgressor, is always represented as the son of Brahma, born of some impure aspect of the latter like his wrath (as Manyu) or blood (Kramrisch, pp. 114-5). Notwithstanding secondary sectarian elaborations, the hostility between the two, culminating in the sudden parricide, is expressive of the sudden rupture that transgression introduces into the mode of being of the Brahman. Moreover, in conformity with the religion of interdictions, it permits the presentation of the sacrificial beheading as a (mere) punishment for the primordial incest.59

The "sacrilegious" notations of Brahma's fifth head may be multiplied by comparing it to other figures of transgression within Brahmanism itself, but my purpose here is to merely emphasize that the transgressive essence of Bhairava is in many ways bequeathed to him by the very head he decapitates. Otherwise, the glorification of Bhairava in mythological traditions that remain at heart Brahmanical and claim to amplify the Vedic doctrines will remain incomprehensible. Unlike the Sudra Unmatta-Bhairava resolutely opposed to caste distinctions, the Kapalikas (re-) converted by Sankara appear to have been all Brahmans. Epigraphic evidence suggests the existence of Brahman Kapalikas specializing in the *Atharvaveda*, 60and it is such adepts who must have served as intermediaries between the Brahmanical sacrifical ideology on the one hand and low caste Kapalikas having no access to Vedic texts and resorting entirely to the Bhairavagamas on the other. Lorenzen (*Kapalikas*,pp. 81-2, 189) has sharply differentiated the Supreme Penance of the Kapalikas from that of the Pasupatas, which conforms rather to the *Mahavrata* of Patañjali's *Yogasutra* ii.30-31, prescribing the unconditional practice of the five restraints (*yama*):nonviolence (ahimsa), truthfulness (*satya*),non-theft (*asteya*),chastity (brahmacarya), and non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*)regardless of status, place, time, and occasion, virtures enjoined by later Pasupata texts like the *Pañcarthabhasya* and the *Ratnatika*,and later cultivated assiduously by their monasticized successors, the Kalamukhas, especially in the Deccan area.

But a problem remains. Not only is the Pasupata weapon, in the form of the Brahmasiras, identified by *Atharvasiras Upanisad* 67 with the Pasupata Vow with which the Vedic sages were imbued on Siva-Bhairava's appearance in the Deodar forest, but there also exists the troubling category of the Mahapasupatas, who were alternatively identified with the Pasupatas, Kapalikas and especially the Kalamukhas, and yet generally distinguished from all three categories.61 The true significance of this confusing category lies not so much in its elusive historical determinations but rather in the abiguity of the term *Mahavrata* and the (dialectical) continuity between the interdictory pole of the (nevertheless symbolically transgressive) Pasupatas and the transgressive pole of the (nevertheless ascetic) Kapalika yogins. This intrinsic ambivalence is revealed even in their monastic reorganization as Kalamukhas, whose preceptors not only sometimes bore the name Kalabhairava but even dedicated temples to (Virabhadra, Kali, and the Kapalika-) Bhairava. Tondaiman of Kañci brought to Tiruvorriyur "from the banks of the Ganges 500 Brahmana Mahavratins and

dedicated several images of Kali and Bhairava and one of Siva in the form of a teacher of the Mahavratins." 62 The Kalamukhas were not only mostly erudite Brahman-*panditas* but also were often expert in *both* Pasupata and Vedic traditions, so much so that their priest Honnaya is praised in the same verse as a Mahavratin, Mahapasupata, *and* a Srotriya. That a Kalamukha inscription invokes Siva-Lakulisa as "the heart of Brahma shining as a stone on which is inscribed the *sasana* of the Vedas which extol the abode of Visvanatha" (p. 114), is hardly surprising when the *Pasupatasutra* is partly based on the (Kathaka-) *Taittiriya Aranyaka* (p. 182, n. 48). Indeed, just before the Kapalika is addressed as "Mahapasupata," the ridiculous Pasupata of the *Mattavilasa* is himself addressed, like the laughing Vidusaka, as "Mahabrahmana." Likewise, in Anandarayamakhin's *Vidyaparinayana* (IV, after v. 32) the Kapalika Somasiddhanta defends his use of wine, meat, etc., prohibited in the (classical) Veda, by affirming "the doctrine of the authoritativeness of the Veda with compliance to the *Bhairavagamas*"(Lorenzen, pp. 88-9).

Although Brahma's ritual purity matches the extreme asceticism of Siva (-Bhairava) and both are defined by an essential transgressive dimension, Brahma expresses these values only within the context of the Brahmanical sacrifice and Vedic tradition whereas Rudra expresses them even independently of this context despite his intimate links with the violent, dangerous, transgressive pole of the Vedic sacrifice. It is on this background that the well known opposition, complementarity and identity of Brahma and the five-headed Siva should be analyzed (O'Flaherty, *Asceticism*,pp. 111-138; see n. 2). The Brahmastra that Arjuna-Indra receives from the *brahmán* Drona-Brhaspati (purohita) is no diferent from the Pasupatastra he wins through the favour of the outcaste tribal Kirata-Siva; and if Arjuna bears this Brahmasiras like the Untouchable Kapalika, this is because Bhairava himself inherited his Brahmanicide from the Vedic Indra.

E. The Royal Diksita: Arjuna's Penance and Indra's Brahmanicide

The exoteric image of the exemplary relation between the royal sacrificer (yajamana) and his officiating purohita is mythically represented by the couple Indra-cum-Brhaspati/Brahma, for it is only through the preliminary purification of the classical diksa, amounting to a (temporary but) veritable Brahmanization, that any (non-Brahman including) warrior from the Ksatriya caste could engage himself in

the sacrifice proper. 63 Whereas the mere ferocious warrior Bhima (-Bhairava) is hardly distinguishable from a Candala-executioner in his savage acts of sacrificial slaughter (*pasumaram*),and is in fact subtly identified with his victim, the demoniac Duryodhana, by the simultaneity of their births, the model-king Arjuna, although partaking in his elder brother Bhima's physical force and military prowess (*bala*),is nevertheless imbued with ascetic self-denial (*indriyajaya*),yogic concentration (*ekagrata*),and the whiteness of Brahmanical purity implied in his very name.64 It is because this renunciatory dimension is integral to Hindu kingship that it is the Brahman-like Dharma-Yudhisthira, and not the Ksatriya Arjuna, who is consecreted king by the *Mahabharata* to perform its Rajasuya sacrifice. And if Bhima distinguishes himself from Duryodhana by his subservience not only to his elder brother Dharma but also to his younger brother, this is because (the "crowned" *Kiritin*-)Arjuna synthesizes in himself the antithetical bráhman and *ksatra* of his elder brothers and is himself, although the very incarnation of imperial Victory (*Jaya*),ever devoted to Dharma.65

But the transgressive universalization of the (pre-classical) royal diksita, charged with the impurity of death, is expressed not only through his identification with Prajapati as the sacrificial Year/Universe but also in the mytheme of Indra's decapitation of his demoniac purohita Visvarupa. Arjuna's father, the king of the gods, undergoes the embryonic "expiation" for his Brahmanicide within the stalk of the lotus-womb in an island pond, before he is discovered by the feminized Agni in the maternal waters. "Indra's contamination by evil (*anrta*, *papman*)recalls the similar state of the sacrificer, who seeks to transfer this burden to his rival contender (as Indra transfers it to various carriers); both the year-long trial of the evil-laden god and the period of hiding in diminished form in the lotus pond must be linked to the gestation-like diksa of the sacrificial cult. Indra becomes, in effect, the embryo carried in darkness, surrounded by impurity, awaiting a violent birth."66 The inherent comic possibilities of royal transgression are especially exploited in the exemplary Arjuna's disguise as the "virile eunuch," Brhannada, during the Pandavas' thirteenth embryonic year of exile in the Fish (-Womb) country Matsyadesa of king Androgyne (Virata). "In ritual terms, this year of hiding, like Indra's period of fearful concealment in the lotus pond, is a kind of diksaa moment of ritualized separation, 'regression' to an infantile (or, indeed, embryonic) state, and, at the end, an initiatory rebirth."67 Just as this regression is often projected onto the mother figure, like the Ganga or Vaisno-Devi, the androgynous fusion of the diksita with the womb within is conversely

also expressed by the maternity of the king himself. Thus, in the *Pañcavaradaksetramahatmya*,Indra disguises himself as a pregnant woman to approach his mother for final refuge and on being discovered is transformed into a leper, who in despair instead embraces his wife Paulomi. In the final analysis, the transgressive diksa is but the internalized sacrificial process of the Brahmanized yajamana giving royal birth to himself (see n. 87).

Arjuna, on receiving the diksa from Yudhisthira, is endowed with a technique of *anamnesis* or "recollection" (*pratismrti*),and his succeeding quest probably refers to an inward journey to a pre-natal condition before ascending to a

supra-human condition. Like the Brahman Vratyas consecrated to Rudra, he is armed not only with yoga and tapas but also with the real equipment of a warrior as if he were setting out on the sacrifice of battle, in which he is invariably preceded by Rudra. The Brahmanicidal Vedic homology between the outcaste (*niravasita*)Rudra and the royal Indra 68 underlies the epic identification of the initiated Arjuna with the impure Kirata-Siva insofar as they simultaneously pierce the demoniac transposition of the sacrificial boar (*yajña-varaha*)."Dumb" (Muka) like the diksita himself observing his vow of silence, the boar apparently substitutes for Arjuna himself as sacrificial victim, for the royal diksita is immediately thereafter bodily crushed by the impure Kirata into a deathly embryonic (pinda) condition. It is paradoxically the defiling embrace of the tribal Rudra that renders Arjuna wholly auspicious and not only confers upon him the transgressive Brahmasiras but also the access to heaven (*svarga*).

This is hardly surprising when it is this same transgressive dimension underlying the sacrificial order that prompts Yama-Dharmaraja to appear before Yudhisthira himself as a dog, Bhairava's own theriomorphic form, in order to ensure his entry to svarga. Indeed, it is only after he executes the symbolic Brahmanicide of his elder brother Dharma, followed by his own symbolic suicide through a megalomaniac self-exaltation recalling the universalization of the diksa, that Arjuna actually kills his eldest brother Karna, the solar hero hidden in Varunic obscurity. Although Asvatthaman-Rudra, lacking the yogic and Brahmanical accomplishments of Arjuna-Indra, is incapable of retrieving the destructive magical power of his Brahmasiras, he has acquired his sorcerer's techniques only by virtue of his Brahman parentage, just as the present-day, often gruesome, magical practices on the folk and popular level still correspond, unknown to their own perpetrators, to the symbolic order, selfishly perverted, of the Brahmanical sacrifice. The social opposition between the central (divine) king and the marginal

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sorcerer lost in the petty possibilities of black magic should not obscure their mirror-like complementarity and the ultimate identity of self-abnegation and magical violence in the priestly first-function incarnated in the dual divinity Mitra-Varuna. The "Sivaized" Asvatthaman's equine notations assume their full significance only in the light of the identification of the sacrificial horse of the Asvamedha with (Agni-) Prajapati, equated with the diksita, who sprung as the Rgvedic Sun from king Varuna's embryonic waters. 69

F. The Sin-Eating Bhairava: Death and Embryogony in Kasi

It is because Bhairava incarnates the transgressive essence of the (royal) yajamana guilty of murdering the sacrificial victim, that the *Skanda Purana* (4.81.1-25) returns the compliment by making the Vrtrahan-Indra himself expiate his Brahmanicide like a foul-smelling Kapalika, before finally freeing himself at Kapalamocana by discharging the Evil Man in himself, in the form of a golden self-image, onto a reluctant Brahman. For this condescension, the degraded Mahabrahmana is not only, like the royal scapegoat Vidusaka, reviled by the citizens of Banaras for whom he still performs their rites, especially funerary rites, but also rendered Untouchable,70 like the Sin-Eating (*Papabhaksana* Kapalika-) Bhairava even after his supposed purification at Kapalamocana. This inner identity of the (Maha-) Brahmana and the Untouchable finds its mythical parallel in the identical funerary notations of Bhairava at Kañci and Brahma's fifth head at Kasi (*supra* n. 25). And just as the greedy purohita-like Vidusaka is constantly pampered with gifts of food (especially pinda-like *modakas*),jewellery, clothes, and other valuables, the Mahabrahmanas too, most of all the Dom-(Yama-) *Raj* of today, heap their fortunes by virtue of their ritual function.71

Even on the sociological level, it is the Kusle-Jogi, successor of the Kapalika, who plays the role of Mahabrahmana among the Newars of Nepal, not only by receiving the clothes of the dead at the *chvasa*,the ritual stone where the quarter's death-and-birth impurities are deposited, but also by receiving food offerings including meat, fish, etc., during the *nhaynama*-riteson the seventh day after the death. The mythical justification is the decapitation of Brahma's fifth head during the inauspicious pañcaka (*dhanista naksatra*),the depositing of his clothes at the chvasa to be taken away by Gorakhnath, who revives the lifeless Brahma on the seventh day in the temple of Batuk Bhairava. The Newars still deposit a five headed Brahma figure at the chvasa to

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neutralize the possibility of a chain reaction of five deaths due to the untimely death during the pañcaka. Thus the impure

initiatic death of the Brahmanized diksita finds its funerary transposition in the condensed ritual figure of the Banarasi Mahabrahmana who impersonates the dead man's ghost (preta) and is indeed consubstantial with the deceased, and this sacrificialization of natural death (-ritual) finds its mythical counterpart in Bhairava, through his conquest of Death, usurping the very throne of Yama in Kasi, the cremation ground of the Hindu universe. 72

The funerary application of the origin myth finds semi-independent expression in the sneering demon head of the Brahma-Raksasa (or -Pisaca), apparently a former tirtha-purohita like the Pisaca of the *Kasi-Khanda*,decapitated by Bhairava, and now regularly receiving tirthasraddha offered by pilgrims on their way to Gaya to fulfill their ritual obligations towards their ancestors (pitr), and also the tripindi-raddha for the calming and exorcism of evil spirits (preta, pisaca, bhuta, etc.). It is through such mechanisms exteriorizing the degraded Untouchable dimension of the Mahabrahmana that the Brahma presiding over the pure domain of the classical Vedic sacrifice has been transformed into the lowly popular village Brahms, hardly distinguishable from the unhewn stone Bhairavas and the earthen-mound Birs.73 Bhairava's frequent appellation as "Lord of Ghosts" (*Bhutanatha*),no doubt owes a great deal to this universe of death and the manipulation of its shadowy denizens by low caste specialists like the Ojhas, who gather at Manikarnika during *Kala-Ratri* (Diwali) to recharge their magical powers before the image of Batuka Bhairava. Like Dionysos, whose feet are licked by the watchdog Cerberus while returning from the kingdom of Hades, with whom he is identified by Heraclitus, Bhairava is the fullness of Death-in-life. Through his initiatic death, even the Pasupata (and no doubt the Kapalika) was assimilated to the laughing exuberance of a preta; and the Vratya, like the diksita, was already a dead man even in the midst of life.74

Lorenzen suggests that Bhairava's Brahmanicide origin myth is derived, at least in part, from the *Mahabharata* story of the Raksasa head, decapitated by Rama, sticking to the thigh of the sage Mahodara who was relieved of it only by bathing at the Ausanas tirtha on the Sarasvati River, which thereby came to be known as Kapalamocana, "probably identical with a tank of this name on the Sarsuti or Sarasvati River ten miles southeast of Saudhara."75 If the Kapalikas came to Kasi instead, this was because, by flowing north, Mother Ganga herself strives here to return to her own source, and even now the sacred

tank at Manikarnika beside the cremation-ghat is believed to be nourished directly by the primordial waters of the Himalayan Gaumukh whence she emerges to sanctify the Hindu subcontinent. The uterine equivalence of the Hindu goddess Ganga and the Vedic god Varuna is betrayed in mythico-ritual conjunctions like Varuna having performed penance with Ganga-devi to be appointed lord of the waters and aquatic creatures at Kañci (*Kankavareccaram*). 76The embryogonic fusion of diksita with maternal womb permits the projection of traits like androgyny and regression on the mother symbol itself, as in the case of Vaisno-Devi having spent nine months in her own womb.

This ever-present embryogonic significance, lent to Kasi by the reverse flow of the Ganga, literally engulfs the sacred centre of Hinduism, when her flood waters likewise reverse the flow of her tributary, the Varuna, and its seasonal sub-tributary, the Matsyodari, to encircle the entire city and its inhabitants in its womb, thereby transforming it into the primordial mound of archaic cosmogony. The Omkara temple on its hillock on the banks of the former Kapalamocana at the heart of the sacred city was transformed by this primeval deluge into an island, just like its prototype, the Omkara *jyotirlinga* of Central India in the middle of the sacred Narmada River. It was during this rare but exceedingly auspicious "Fish-Womb Conjunction" (*Matsyodari-Yoga*),when the Ganga itself is the Fish-Womb (-Lake), that the Brahmanicide Bhairava plunged into the amniotic waters of Kapalamocana originally situated at the confluence of the Matsyodari and the backward-flowing Mother Ganga. Hindu kings apparently continued to imitate the example of the Kapalika-Bhairava right up until the final short-lived efflorescence of Varanasi before the Muslim conquest, for a Gahadvala inscription records that in the twelfth century king Govindacandra bathed in the Ganga at Kapalamocana in (during) the Fish-Womb (conjunction) and made a land-donation to a Brahman.77

But for his exceptional socio-political status, the Hindu king is no more than the sacrificer par excellence. And indeed the perpetual cremation of corpses at Manikarnika, the navel of Kasi, reproduces the embryogonic implications of Bhairava's initiatic death, thereby transforming the "Great Cremation Ground" (*mahasmasana*)into the cosmogonic centre transcending the spatio-temporal order of the Hindu sacrificial universe that ceaselessly (re-)emerges from its womb to (re-)dissolve in this microcosmic pralaya modelled on the fire sacrifice. Discus (*cakra*)and lotus pond (*puskarini*)are equivalent womb symbols, and the primordial Cakrapuskarini that Visnu dug with his discus and filled with his sweat in the course of his cosmogonic austerities (tapas)

is ultimately identical with the lotus pool behind the Visnu temple at Tirukantiyur where the *brahmakapala* of the Tamil Bhairava fell. This embryogonic significance of the Cakrapuskarini, renamed Manikarnika when the nectarine (amrta-) Soma concentrated in Siva's ear-ring fell into it from his ear (-womb), is confirmed by the proximity of Visnu's Foot (*pada*),the mysterious source of the Ganga beyond even Gaumukh, receptacle of Visnu-Trivikrama's renowned "third stride," where the most eminent corpses are burnt. 78 As a preta, the dead man, represented by the Mahabrahmana, returns to the womb, represented by a water pot hanging from a sacred *pipal* tree, and his new body is nourished with a daily *modaka*-likerice ball (pinda) so that on the tenth day it is fully formed like a newborn baby, and it is ready to be transformed into an ancestor (pitr) on the eleventh day, when the Mahabrahmana is worshipped, fed, given gifts, and departs having smashed the water pot dwelling of the *pret*.79 This embryogonization of death, not specific to cremation, is equally applicable to the Harappan funerary urns and burial elsewhere: "burial in the embryonic position is explained by the mystical interconnection between death, initiation, and return to the womb. In some cultures this close connection will finally bring about the assimilation of death to initiationthe dying man is regarded as undergoing an initiation."80

Even quite independently of the Kapalika-Bhairava's entry into Kasi within the fish-wombed Ganga and his dip at Kapalamocana, Bhairava's begging from the Seven Sages in the Daru forest ritually imitated by the Brahmanicide Kapalikas' begging from seven houses during their twelve-year wanderings as prescribed by the law-books, is already charged with the embryonic notations and impurity of the diksa. It is akin to the twelve-year exile of the Pandavas accompanied by the menstruating Draupadi, which culminates in their thirteenth year incognito as embryos in the Fish-Country of king Matsya (see n. 67). For the forest is already the "womb of Brahman" (*brahmayoni*)in the *Brahmanas* and seven is the embryogonic number par excellence right from the Vedas, as exemplified especially by the seven-holed anthill substituted for the severed head of the *Agnicayana*,which in fact assimilates the decapitation to an embryonic regression.81 The present-day Daranagar was settled after the cutting-down of the Daruvana within Kasi near Vrddhakala and Haratirath. This is why, even after having lost its paradisaical forest-hermitages, Kasi still remains Anandavana, "The Forest of (the) Bliss (of Brahman)"; and its seven concentric circles, corresponding to the seven yogic spinal centers, are guarded by fifty-six divinized icons of the *Mahabrahmana* appointed

as eight Ganesas to the cardinal points of each circle, serving again thereby as mediators between him and the eight traditional ksetrapala Bhairavas. 82

Reflected also in the pilgrimage cult at Vaisno-Devi, the symbolic identity of the transgressive Bhairava in the womb of the Ganga with the demon-devotee as sacrificial victim, is worked out in the founding myth of the Bisket Jatra at Bhaktapur, where the Kala Bhairava of Kasi lost his head forever to Vaisnavi appearing as Bhadrakali. The bloody obstetrics of the diksa is particularly evident in Andhra Pradesh where Ankamma dismembers the foetus of her homonym, the queen-mother Ganga (Gangamma), at the twelfth year of her pregnancy, and the sacrificial scenario finds its prolongations on the folk level in the Tamil cremation ground cult of the infanticide Ankalamman where Irulappan, the child-Siva, is not only the dark-one like Kala-Bhairava but is also identifiable with his royal father (Kasi-) Vallalarajan.83 Having torn open the belly of her alter ego, Ankalamman cradles "her" dismembered child, like the baby Dionysos-Lyknitès, in the womb of the winnowing fan. Killing his mother Semele by his very birth, the terrible Dionysos is likewise his own victim, not only driving the Maenads to devour the cubs of savage beasts, but himself lacerated as live bull (= Zagreus) in Crete. And in Tenedos he was sacrificially axed to death in the form of a newborn calf of a cow treated like a mother who had only just delivered. Dionysos was clearly identified with the sacred king when he united ritually with the queen Basilinna, in the name of the entire city, during the Athenian "death-festival" of the Anthesteries.84

Suvarnakala-Bhairava is worshipped beside Nataraja in the sanctum of the Cidambaram temple; more significantly, a daily secret *cakrapuja* is performed towards noon for the *Akasa-linga* itself, where the divinity is first of all invoked with the appropriate *yantras* and mantras in the form of Akasa-Bhairava by the officiating diksitas (cf. *supra* n. 13). Expressed through such symbolic equivalences as the embryonic intercalary thirteenth month containing within itself the ritual (Prajapati-) Year as a totality, the universalization of the sacrificer through the diksa has been displaced from Bhairava,

charged with the impurity of death, to his purified alter ego Kasi-Visvanatha, the "Lord of the Universe," who remains the implacable indifferent witness to the violent scenario enacted by his surrogate; hardly unexpected when the reformed classical sacrifice has already concentrated the cosmic Prajapati within the renunciate nature of the pure yajamana who has conquered Death, but only symbolically.85 At Puri, however, the

divinized king, although still retaining his inner purity as in his ritual substitute of a young Brahman celibate (*Mudra Hasta*),remains "Lord of the Universe" (Jagannatha) only through the operations of death and rebirth performed upon him by impure "tribal" Sabara-priests, whose mythic ancestor won this prerogative by his sacrilegious killing of a bull at the instigation of the king's minister. This diksa-like "Body-Renewal" (*Navakalevara*)of the royal Visnu, already prefigured in his yearly "sickness" (*anavasara*)followed by the chariot-drive (*ratha-yatra*)inaugurated by the king transformed into an Untouchable sweeper, is presided over by the Bhairava-like Narasimha, and occurs only during an intercalary month of Asadha. All this serves as sufficient preparation for the eventual revelation of the probably transgressive connotations of the mysterious *brahmapadartha* that vivifies Jagannatha from within and is transferred by the blind-folded Sabaras in so uncanny an atmosphere. 86

The royal character of the pure central divinity, even in the absence of a real king, is also seen at Tiruvannamalai where once every year Siva-Annamalaiyar is informed of the death of the virtuous king Vallala, and after a mourning ceremony is crowned son-successor to the childless king. A historical Ballala stands in the Ankalamman myth behind the demoniac Vallalarajan, whose seven-walled palace, equated with the cremation ground at whose centre lies the pregnant queen-goddess, is but an image of Annamalaiyar within the womb (*garbha-grha*)of the Tiruvannamalai temple with its seven concentric enclosures. Moreover, at Kumbhakonam, where the Kasi-Visvanatha temple stands on the Mahamagha lake formed from the amrta spilled from Brahma's primordial pot (-womb), and wherein the nine most sacred rivers of India led by the Ganga mix their waters once every twelve years, Vallalarajan is even promoted to the king of Kasi, embryogonic center of the Hindu sacrificial universe. Would this not be precisely because the diksa underlies all legitimate kingship in India? It is in the polar axis formed by the epi-central Tiruvannamalai temple-capital and the peripheral cremation ground of Mel Malaiyanur, substituted for the Mahasmasana, that the pan-Indian Brahmanicide myth (*kapparai*)centred on Kasi and the regional historically determined myth of Vallalarajan (pregnant cremation-figure) would have fused to provide the mythical background to the ritual complexities of the cult of Ankalamman. The kapparai received from the Kapalin is itself identified with Ankalamman who then "takes the *avataram* of Brahma and goes to the cremation-ground;" and the pregnant cremation-figure of the goddess-victim is itself identified with a Brahman woman. By

donating the transgressive fifth head of Brahma to the goddess before fusing with her as a child to form the primordial androgyne, (Siva-) Kapalin indeed mediates between the blood-thirsty Ankalamman of the low caste Cempatavar fishermen and the purified Brahmanical milieu of Annamalaiyar, the Tamil transposition of Visvanatha as the fiery axis mundi that originally manifested itself at Kasi. 87

G. The Khatvanga-Bhairava: Executioner, Victim, and Sacrificial Stake

The immeasurable world pillar traversing and uniting the three cosmic levels of netherworld, earth, and heavens, from which Bhairava emerges to appropriate Brahma's central head, is reduced to more handy ritual proportions in the cranial staff (khatvanga) which the Kapalika wields as a weapon.88 On the basis of the explicit textual evidence of Tibetan Buddhist tantras further elucidated by the oral traditions of their lamaistic practitioners, the khatvanga, surmounted successively by a fresh moist head, a half decomposed one, topped by a dry skull, and provided with a Brahmanical cord (yajñopavita), has not only been identified with the world-tree, also called Amrta and growing in the cremation ground, but the entire symbolic complex has been derived from esoteric psycho-physical, especially sexual, techniques centering on the production of the ambrosia of "supreme felicity" (*mahasukha*),through a process of alternating ascent and descent within the *susumna*.This ritual system, comprising other implements like the sacrificial dagger (*phur-bu=kila*)and the alchemical fireplace-skull standing on three heads, refers back to the liberating murder by (a Buddhist divinity like Heruka assimilated to) Bhairava of the demonized, and still terrible, Rudra, but in a scenario that deliberately underlines

the consubstantiality of divine killer and demoniac victim amidst the transgressive valorization of impurities (like excrement, etc.) converted into nectar.89 Although philosophically elaborated in the light of specifically Buddhist tenets, the underlying techniques and formal symbolic system are clearly derived from the Hindu, and even Vedic, universe.

The theatrical irony achieved by Euripides in *The Bacchae* through the mirror-like symmetry of the masked Dionysos confronting the royal Pentheus, travestied as a Bacchant before falling from the tree top to be torn apart by the Maenads led by his own mother, reveals itself in the Corinthian ritual, where the bloody tree honoured as a divinity is carved into effigies of Dionysos, to be a veritable identity. Hardly

had the tree bearing the "unequaled" (like Dionysos) Pentheus, whose glory should rise to heaven, straightened itself to aim upwards at the sky; no sooner had Dionysos himself disappeared letting his victim fall to his sacrificial fate, than from the earth a divine fire-ball streaked heavenward. 90 In the sixth Act of *Sakuntala*,the Vidusaka, violently twisted by Indra's charioteer in three places (*tribhanga*),like his own crooked staff (*kutilaka*),explicitly compares himself to the immolated sacrificial victim, and the kutilaka itself is a caricature of the Brahmanical staff *dandakastha* (=*brahmadanda*),which is assimilated even in the Buddhist tantras to the tripartite axis mundi. Planted on the border of the sacrificial altar (*vedi*),precisely half-within and half-without, the yupa represents the neutralization of the opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*),especially evident in the conditions governing the bloody sacrifice performed by Narasimha on emerging from the (cosmic) pillar. This aspect is fused with its phallic dimension, evident in its later transposition as the sivalinga emerging from the yoni, especially in the impure phallic names of the three brothers of whom only the middle one Sunahsepa is designated as the Brahman sacrificial victim. Although no longer the site of the actual immolation in the purified classical ritual, the sacrificial stake, still expressive of the essential identity of the Vedic sacrificer and his divinized victim, is described in a Vedic hymn as stained with blood.91

During the cosmogonic New Year festival of Bisket Jatra at Bhaktapur, Bhairava is erected as the linga in the form of the cross-shaped pole bearing two long cloth-banners representing the two slaughtered serpents from which the festival derives its name. The copulation between the pole and supporting mound of earth is also enacted in the ritual collision of the chariots of Akasa-Bhairava and Bhadra-Kali, who comes specially to witness the erection of the linga and the death of the snakes. She is probably no different from the lusty but deadly princess of the founding legend from whose nostrils the snakes emerged every night to slay her lovers until an unknown prince slew them instead through his exceptional vigilance and even married her. On the last day of the year (Caitra *masant*),a buffalo is sacrificed at the *pitha* of Bhadra-Kali and the Untouchables (Pore) bring its head up to the central Taumadhi square where the Akasa-Bhairava temple is situated and destroy it as soon as the New Year pole is erected. From there a "death-procession" consisting of a traditional bier carrying a pot (*bhajakhahca*,the first term '*bhaja*'meaning not only "pot" but also the large "head" of a thin person), instead of a real corpse, returns to the linga late the same night. After being left beside the neighbouring Bhadra-

Kali pitha, the bier is then brought back to Taumadhi, when the pole is pulled down on the evening of the first day of Baisakh. The bier, which was formerly used to collect from the palace the suitors killed by the twin snakes, comes in vain for the corpse of the victorious prince and returns instead with the substituted "pot-head" to the pitha beside the cremation ghat. The erection of the linga, often associated with a snake (like Ganesa's trunk or the Vidusaka's kutilaka), signifies above all the neutralization and annihilation of the opposing vital breaths (*prana/apana*)resulting in the raising of the serpentine *kundalini* up the median channel (susumna) in the very act of sexual (and even incestuous) intercourse. Like Mahakala, the susumna is said to devour Kala (death) represented by the alternating lateral breaths; and in the Tibetan tantras Rudra "eats" or is "eaten" by his mother in the cremation ground beside the cosmic tree called *Amrta* or *Khatvanga* and especially "Fornication," and ultimately attains deliverance to become Mahakala. 92 The sacrificed buffalo ritually actualizes the initiatic death of not only the royal lover but also of Kala-Bhairava who came from Kasi out of curiosity to see the pole-festival, originally consecrated to Bhadra-Kali alone, only to be discovered by the Tantric priests and to be decapitated before he could escape. Even now, a very secret, closely-guarded bundle accompanies Akash-Bhairab as he goes to regularly unite with his demanding consort, and it is understood that its contents are linked to the severed head.

With the assimilation of the greenery at its extremity to fecundating semen eagerly sought by barren couples, the pole is no different from the imposing erect linga of the Unmatta-Bhairava at the Pasupatinath temple, which newly married couples touch reverentially in order to be assured of offspring. The sexual identity of the victim and executioner is clearer in the founding myth of the festival of Indresvar Mahadev at Panauti where, pursued by the insatiable Bhadra-Kali, Siva plunged into the confluence of two rivers defining the site of the temple only to emerge, like the invisible median river, as the perpetually ithyphallic Unmatta-Bhairava to take her three times from behind. The phallic identity of the yupa is especially evident in the buffalo sacrificed to Thampa (= Stambha) Bhairava, "just before the temple precincts of Indresvar. The animal is destined for Unmatta Bhairava, but as this god is situated within the pure sacred precincts of Indresvar, its throat is slit outside, before Thampa Bhairava conceived here to be his double."93 At Pasupatinath, animal sacrifices are offered on particular occasions to Unmatta-Bhairava himself, within the precincts, and the pure central Siva participates indirectly through a ritual

cord linking him with Bhairava.

The royal character of the Bisket cosmogony becomes explicit in the Indra Jatra of neighbouring Kathmandu where the linga is identified instead, as in the Vedic cosmogony, with the (*dhvaja*-emblemof the) king of the gods Indra, who rains on the Valley before the full moon of Bhadra (September). 94 As prescribed by the *Brhat-Samhita* (chap. 43), the pole is dragged on the 8th day of the bright half of Bhadrapada into the capital and the festival begins with its erection on the 12th day. Like the diksita bound in Varuna's noose, wooden statues of Indra bound in cords are placed, often in prison-like cages, at the foot of the pole(s), or, like a thief with outstretched arms on high scaffolds. The actual role of sacrificial victim is assumed rather by the Kirata king Yalambara whose head, violenty chopped off by Krsna before he could join the losing side in the Mahabharata war, landed at Indra Chowk, where it is still worshipped as Akash Bhairab, even after being reinstated as the official emblem of the Royal Nepali Airlines. The founding myth, however, suggests that it is Indra himself who undergoes the sacrificial death. For Indra's mother, having secured the release of her son from the Valley people who had bound him for stealing their *parijata* flowers, was leading back to heaven the dead of the previous year, when the chain of the procession broke and the souls fell into the lake Indra Daha. In the ritual, on the evening before the full moon a farmer costumed as a Dagini (*dakini*:female demon) emerges from Maru Hiti, where Indra had been imprisoned, to lead a procession of women from households where death had occurred and search for the fallen souls, and hundreds of them subsequently make the eight mile pilgrimage to bathe on the dawn of the full moon in the Indra lake, believing that they are accompanied by Indra himself.

Although Indra's mother does not appear as such in the funeral procession, the royal Nepali mother goddess Taleju emerges in procession the same afternoon as the pre-pubertal virgin Kumari, escorted by two boys representing Ganesa and Bhairava. On the full moon evening, i.e., the second day of the procession, the Kumari, after having paused before the black Akash Bhairab at Indrachowk and the Sweto Bhairab at Hanuman Dhoka, (re-)legitimizes the king's rule for the following year by placing the sacred red *tika* mark on his forehead. More light is shed on its significance by the cruel slaughter of an enraged buffalo during the Sawo Bhaku demon dance within the old royal palace, where it is the blood of its decapitation by Akash Bhairab (dancer), attended by Candi and Kumari, that is used for the tika on the witnessing king. One would be justified in juxtaposing it to the

offering of Kala-Bhairava's alias, Kasi-Visvanatha's own head, during the Bisket-Jatra to Bhadra-Kali. The full moon marks the beginning of the dark half of Asvina (of Bhadrapada in the *amanta* reckoning) when the most potent *Mahalaya-sraddha* is performed for the departed ancestors (pitr), particularly when the Sun is in Kanya (Virgo). The calendrical determinations clearly reveal the funerary rites to be a popular transposition of the royal diksita's mortal regression into the virgin-womb of the mother (-goddess) to be reborn afresh for a New Year of legitimate sovereignty. 95

The tension between the royal "Aryan" sacrificer and his impure alter ego finds festive dramatization in the ritual conflict between the incoming procession of Indra and the inhabitants who display their hereditary masks of Bhairava before their homes, like the famous Akash Bhairab itself outside his temple at Indra Chowk, a scenario that is cast in the image of

tribal Yalambara's legendary capture of the invading Aryan chief. But their ultimate identity is evident not only in the merger of the essentially black (Kala-) Bhairava and white (Arjuna) Indra in the intermediate figure of the royal Sweto or White-Bhairab who reveals himself before the royal palace only during the Indra Jatra, but also at the very end of the festival when a funeral-like procession drags the Indra-pole to be immersed in the sacred waters of the Bagmati river before being retrieved and hacked into splinters to feed the sacred flame at the nearby shrine of Pacali Bhairab beside the cremation ground. And once every twelve years, Pacali Bhairab, whose name has been derived from the Vedic Licchavi institution of the *pañcali*,assumes the form of an impure Malakar (gardener) to renew, through their exchange of swords, the King's waning power.96 It certainly cannot be accidental that the cosmogonic marriage of Lat-Bhairo's pillar to the well at Kasi coincides with Indra-Jatra and is celebrated exactly on the full moon of Bhadra, which is most inauspicious for marriages for it signals the beginning of the death rituals of the pitrpaksa.97

Although nowadays identified with the Puranic Kapali-Bhairava, originally located to the northwest of Vasukikund in the present day Nag-Kuan area, Lat-Bhairo is in fact the ancient Kulano different from the Mahasmasana-Stambha (pillar) where the original Kala-Bhairava used to not only devour the sins of pilgrims but also administer the "punishment/suffering" of Bhairava (*bhairavi yatana*),alone conferring final emancipation (moksa) even on the worst of sinners (see plates 15 and 16). The policeman-magistrate (Kotwal) apparently presided over the public ritual execution of criminals in what probably



15. Lat Bhairava pillar, Varanasi. Lat Bhairava (Bhairo) adorned for Sivaratri, 26 February 1987. The top of the pillar rises above its decorated metal encasement, which shows Lat Bhairo's face. Photo courtesy of N. Gutschow.



16. Face of Lat Bhairo on encasement around the Lat Bhairava pillar, Varanasi. Sivaratri decoration. Photo courtesy of N. Gutschow.

was a significant cremation ground, which would account for the terrible character even of its metaphysical transposition. 98 But if the most virtuous of saints cannot aspire to that salvation which even and especially Brahmanicides are assured of in Kasi, this is only because Bhairava as executioner-cum-victim is identical with the all-devouring Fire of Consciousness (also called *Kula*)that consumes all the impurity of sin, and because the sacrificial death was itself assimilated to its fiery ascent up the susumna as the (maha-) smasana (pillar), now remaining as the Lat-Bhairo. The perpetual cremation at Manikarnika, where three streams unite(d) to flow out as the Brahmanala or Pitamahasrotas into the milky way of the Ganga, confirms that all death in Kasi is (modelled on) the initiatic process whereby this flame of consciousness pierces through the sinciput at the "aperture of Brahma" (*brahmarandhra*)to be freed forever.

Even the apparently alternative fate, reserved especially for those who sin in Kasi itself before dying there, to be transformed into ghoulish Rudras (rudrapisaca) before undergoing the rudrayatana at the Mahasmasana-stambha, conforms rigorously to the above model of initiatic death. The (mystic) decapitation of the Tibetan adept, corresponding to the *kapalakriya* performed on the Banaras corpse, when the divine life-force escapes through the brahmarandhra, also corresponds to the murderous liberation of Rudra by a Bhairava-like (*Jigs-byed*)divinity who penetrates the demon at the base of the spine to flash like an arrow or comet through "the opening of the Door of Heaven." Rudra had already

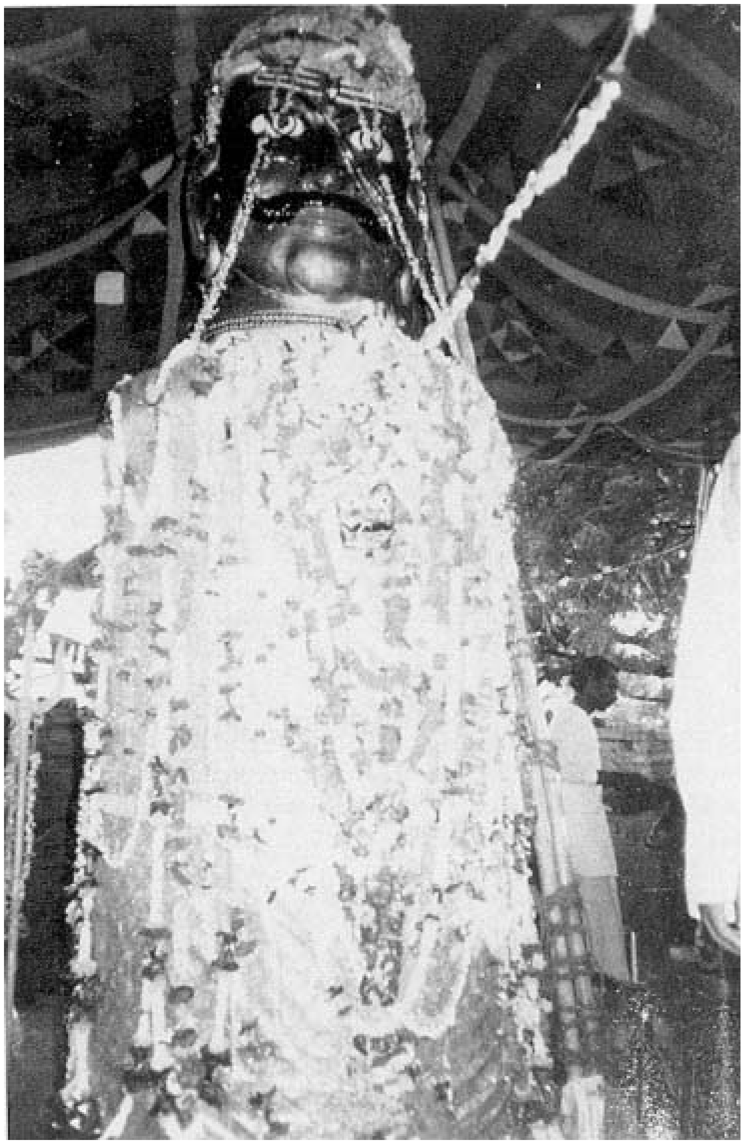
received the tantric initiation in his original incarnation as the master "Deliverance-Salvation/Black," whose name "alludes to his ambiguous nature: he will do evil, but will be finally delivered with the status of the god Mahakala."99 This salvation often occurs in the explicit context of copulation belonging to the same symbolic complex, which is not foreign to the Hindu cremation rites (see n. 115). Since the annual festival of the Kula-Stambha was already being celebrated, in order not to become a Rudrapisaca, on the full moon of Bhadra, this must have in all probability already been in the form of a cosmogonic marriage, in which case the bridegroom must have come from his original temple on the western bank of Omkaresvara. The figure of the Rudrapisaca would itself appear to be a mythic projection of the ghostly (*pretavad*)Rudra-Pasupatas who had their chief center at Omkaresvara, where they had many *asramas* and haunted the Aghoresvara (or Srimukhi) cave. Since Bhairava functioned as Sin-Eater at both the Mahasmasana-Stambha where as Kotwal he executed the ultimate punishment, and also Kapalamocana where as Kapalin he was freed of the

ultimate crime of Brahmanicide, it is perfectly logical that, in the wake of the Muslim occupation of Omkaresvar, Kapalamocana has come to be (re-)identified with Lat-Bhairo tirtha, where the Kapalin remains as executioner, victim, and pillar of the world. 100

The variants on the Ghazi Miya story, retold by the Muslims around the area of the Lat, seem to have grafted onto the martyred warrior many significant fragments of this archaic Hindu mythico-ritual universe of sacrificial death. A bridegroom discovered that he had been chosen to be the next victim, on the very day of his imminent marriage, at the problematic temple of Somnath near the confluence of the Varana with the Ganga at Rajghat, where human sacrifices were once regularly offered to the divinity. Responding to the hysterical condition of the victim's mother, Ghazi Miya bathed in the Ganga and took his place, but the image started sinking as soon as he placed one foot across the threshold. The Muslim hero nevertheless managed to seize the head by its tuft and kick it, before dispersing the hair which grew as a type of grass wherever it fell. In a common variant, Ghazi Miya removed his own head to avoid seeing and being seduced by the hundreds of naked women sent by the king's astrologer in order to destroy the power of his purity and thereby render him an easy sacrificial victim. Nowadays, it is the Lat which is popularly held to be sinking into the ground, and Kala Bhairab was decapitated at the Bhaktapur cosmogony when he had almost completely disappeared into the earth on his underground escape route to Banaras.101 Through that resilience and adaptability so characteristic of Hindu genius, Kala-Bhairava still makes his annual pilgrimage as the royal bridegroom from his present-day temple to re-enact, in the middle of the Muslim Idgah, his fateful marriage by crowning (*mukut*)the Lat-Bhairo with his own head (see plate 17). The popular wisdom of colloquial (Hindi) language still refers to the cremation (ground) as the "place of the bride" (*dulhan ka sthan*)and as the "last marriage" (*akhiri sadi*),and if the Newars can be so confident that the head of Kala-Bhairava at Kasi is not his real head, this is probably because he had already been regularly surrendering it to the Mahasmasana-Stambha even before offering it to Bhadrakali at Bhaktapur.

H. The "Tribalizing" Ekapada-Bhairava and Anuttara in Trika Metaphysics

The Mhaskoba, worshipped by the pastorals and tribals of Maharashtra at such places as Javali, Mhasvad, Borban, Vir, and, especially,



17. Lat Bhairava at Varanasi decorated with the head of Kala Bhairava, with crown (*mukuta*), set atop the central pillar, for Lat Bhairo's marriage to the nearby well. Lat Bhairo's face on the outer encasement shows through the decoration. Photo by Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam.

Sonari, is identified by them as the Brahmanicide Kalabhairava of the Kasi myth who settled down at these places to satisfy his devotees. And Biroba (Virabhadra) is not only identified with Kalabhairava but is also constantly called Kasilinga-Birappa. Precisely because of his transgressive essence and his wild, wandering character, Bhairava has been instrumental, through his heretic, outcaste, even criminal adepts, in the Hinduization of local pastoral and tribal divinities, who gradually came to be identified with one or the other of his varied forms. This has been clearly demonstrated for the Deccan region (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra) in the exemplary case of Khandoba/ Martanda-Bhairava. As a result, Bhairava has often two wives, the legal one coming from the settled agricultural or merchant upper caste culture, and the mistress, also the favorite, coming from the hunting or gathering tribal community and retaining all her savage associations. 102 The splitting of the essentially black (Kala-) Bhairava into two opposing yet complementary forms, black and white, encountered iconographically in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and especially Nepal, and also in ritual, as in the Navadurga-dance of Bhaktapur, probably also reflects the purification or *whitening* of Bhairava as he climbs up the ladder of caste society, just as Rudra had already been rendered auspicious in the form of Siva. Where other divinities like Visnu or especially the goddess have been able to play a similar Hinduizing role, it is only by assuming terrifying

forms, like Narasimha, resembling Bhairava. The goddess takes a form approaching that of Bhairavi, consort of Bhairava, and the couple, being often confused in their sex, facilitate the transition even from an aboriginal goddess, like the wooden post Khambhesvari or Stambhesvari, to the purified male Saiva cult. Conversely, in the mythology of the Dhangars, Siva repeatedly assumes the form of a Gosavi, who, as the successor of the Kapalikas and Naths, must have "tribalized" Hinduism even while playing a Hinduizing role among the tribal Kolis, Gavlis, Kunbis, and other groups beyond the pale of Brahmanical culture. The deified Gosavi still worshipped by the Marathas, Dhangars, Malis, etc., "is called Visvanath because he comes from Kasi," and is indifferently named "Mhasvad-Sid, Kala-bhairava, Bhairavnath, Srisiddhanath or Kasivisvanath."103

Bearers of a transgressive sacrality that transcends the barriers which separate the caste society from the outcaste tribals with their blood-thirsty divinities, the adepts of Bhairava were in the ideal position to incorporate such deities into the Brahmanical symbolical universe by endowing them with traditional attributes and even to elevate them to the level of all-caste Hindu divinities104 or even into

the supreme position of pan-Indian gods of pilgrimage. Lord Jagannatha of Puri is believed to have evolved from an original tribal divinity, worshipped by the mythic Visvavasu, and the "tribal" Sabara priests, who even now officiate alongside the orthodox Brahmans, are alone charged with the ritual impurity of the fatal obstetrics they perform on the divinized king, himself then identified with the demonic *daitas*.Their transgressive *sabari*-pujais supervised by the only Brahman, the Pati Mahapatra, who also inserts the brahmapadartha into Lord Jagannatha. Born of the union of the Aryan king Indradyumna's Brahman Vidyapati with the tribal Visvavasu's daughter Lalita, the Pati Mahapatra, like the Mahabrahmana, incorporates in himself the opposing poles of the pure and the impure. In fact, the three main divinities actually become Ganesa during the bathing festival that marks the onset of their "illness." 105

In the earliest Orissan temples, the various forms of Siva are invariably depicted with upraised (*urdhva*-)linga, and at one stage of his historical evolution Jagannatha was apparently identified with Bhairava, the form he still assumes to symbolically copulate with the devadasi (= Bhairavi) during the evening ritual (see n. 13). It has been suggested that the ithyphallic single-footed Ekapada Bhairava, whose images are so frequent in predominantly tribal Orissa, was easily able to assimilate, through his very iconography, tribal wooden post divinities accepting blood sacrifices.106 But this Tantric divinity associated with the Yoginis is himself derived from the Vedic Aja Ekapada, a multiform of Agni who appears as the central pillar of the world and is juxtaposed to Ahir-Budhnya, "the Serpent of the Deep" (see n. 94). The inherent tension of the Vedic yupa, standing ambivalently astride the sacrificial boundary,107 could equally permit the pacific assimilation of bloody tribal posts *and* the exteriorization of its own sacrificial violence effaced in classical Brahmanism. It is probably because of Jagannatha's identity with the tribal Vedic sacrificial post that the wood (*daru*)for Jagannatha's new body during the Navakalevara is cut down from a tree chosen through such transgressive criteria as the following: on a snake hole with creeping snakes, beside an anthill; near a cremation ground, Siva temple, river, pond; surrounded by three mountains, on a crossing of three ways (=confluence of rivers).108

Even the tribal goddess represented by the primitive forest posts fits in well with the female Tantric identity of Jagannatha as Kali; and the androgynous pillars on the fringes of the Hinduizing process correspond to the feminization of the (royal) diksita as he regresses into

the forest-womb. The wooden posts representing Potu Raju, often identified with Bhairava in Andhra Pradesh, are made of the fiery wood of the femaleindeed maternalsami tree. The inner tension would seen to have split the yupa model so that the post is doubled into a peripheral Potu Raju before the village goddess temple at the very limits of the agglomeration, and an identical isolated post, also of sami, often at the very centre of the village under (the marriage of) a pipal (*asvattha*)and *nim* (substituting for the sami) tree. The ritual identity of centre and periphery becomes evident only when Potu Raju, identical with Mahisasura, is brought from the marginal post as a buffalo to be sacrificed to the goddess beside the central pillar of the village world. Arjuna becomes a eunuch only after having placed his fiery weapons in the womb of the sami tree on the cremation ground hillock identified with (the corpse of) their "dead mother." 109 The "tribalization" of Vedic embryogony through such womb-symbols as river, pond, snake hole, etc., is especially

striking in Maharashtra where Mhasoba, Biroba and especially Khandoba as Martanda-Bhairava live as a snake within the anthill; their mother, who is identified with Ganga-Suryavanti, the place of the hidden Sun, where the Agni-Soma treasure is retained in the symbolic value of turmeric powder.110

Bhairava represents all that terrifies the caste Hindu by violating the fundamental socio-religious norms that govern his life, and thereby functions as the natural focus and melting pot for the assimilation of countless local and regional tribal divinities outside these norms, but none of whomnot even Potu Raju who has played a similar role in South Indiacan claim the pan-Indian, even pan-South Asian, and indeed Brahmanical credentials of Bhairava. If the "Kashmir Saiva" Brahman theoreticians have preferred Bhairava among all possible divinities to represent the absolute (*Anuttara*)more absolute than the Brahman of Samkara, this is no doubt because his criminal and tribal associations correspond perfectly to the ritual violations of Kaula praxis through the exploitation of extreme impurity in order to accede to this absolute. Although the transgressive ideology itself is Vedic and certainly Brahmanical, the exoteric classical image of the Brahman as the pivot of the system of socio-religious interdictions centered on purity necessitated the assumption of the transgressive function by another divinity who would appear as outside this socio-cultural universe, as wholly "Other."111 And when this current assumes an institutionalized form, as in Tantrism, that would admit even outcastes and tribals and must hence necessarily appeal to extra-Vedic authority, it is clear that the fifth head of Brahma, who for all his transgressive

notations still remains strictly a god of the Brahmans and even then hardly worshipped, could no longer serve this purpose. Despite the numerous popular, folk, tribal, and even non-Indian elements that have contributed to the genesis and development of Tantrism, one recognizes "within the tantric systems the same fundamental notions as in the rest of Hinduism: the structure, identicial in its elements, is entirely overturned through a different utilization" based on an esoteric reading reversing the accepted values of the tradition. 112

Much of the symbolic universe of the Kapalika-Bhairava has been retained, minus the actual imitation of the Brahmanicide penance itself, in the ritual praxis of the later Kaulas, many of them Brahman householders, who based their practices, like the Kapalikas, on the Bhairavagamas.113 In terms of spiritual orientation, however, the difference between the two currents appears to be primarily one of degree, although that would have been sufficient to necessitate a considerable deradicalization of the actual practice of the cult. The Kapalikas were extremists in the sense that, although courting sensual pleasures, they had renounced normal life in the world and pushed asceticism and degradation to its very limits. In contrast, the householder Kaulas, precisely because they continued to live in the world and participate in the values of the caste society, had to cultivate and elaborate a closed private rather than an ostentatious public mode of the ideology of transgression. Unlike the unbridled almost disincarnate eroticism of Bhairava and his Kapalika followers, the sexual transgression of the Kaula householder is especially modelled on that of Brahma's fifth head: incest. Abhinavagupta attributes his highest metaphysical realization to his initiation into the technique of the "Kula-sacrifice" (*kulayaga*),also called "Primordial Sacrifice" (*adiyaga*),consisting primarily in the bliss of transgressive sexual union, reinforced by the exceptional consumption of meat, wine, and even more impure reproductive and disgusting substances, like menstrual blood. He specifically recommends the choice of mother, sister, daughter, etc., as sexual partner (*duti*)and as in the case of the Vidusaka, the projection of the goddess incarnated in the partner as "hunch-backed" (*kubja*),lame or otherwise deformed, underlines through a geometric, ambulatory or visual code the transgressive character of the union. The aim is to establish oneself in the absolute Bliss of Bhairava-Consciousness through the exploitation of the latter's partial and conditioned manifestation in the joy of sexual union, which is, however, more total and self-absorbing than the other pleasures of ordinary life, especially as it involves the participation of all the five senses and the mind resulting in their unification.

All the incoming sensory impressions serve as food to kindle and fuel the sexual fire that blazes forth to serve as the vehicle for the expansion of the unsullied all-devouring Consciousness. 114

Outside of this esoteric technique and its soteriological intention, such fundamental transgressions are unequivocally condemned. They presuppose the tantric physiology by attempting during sex to redirect the dispersed energies of

ordinary consciousness and the laterally opposed vital airs to the base of the spine before channelling their flow upwards along the axial susumna, expressed mythico-ritually by the meeting of three ways, confluence of three rivers, killing of two snakes, opening of the third eye and so on. Embryogonic notations are also not lacking, as in the invocation of Ananda-Bhairav(i) in the wine pot (which also explains the fertile fishlets placed in them by the Newars during their Bhairava festivals), and especially in the androgynization of the officiant through wearing female attire and ornaments just after his consumption of the female reproductive substance (kulamrta) from the Sri-Patra which thereby transgressively fills him with Brahman. For the *bhruna* is an embryo before its sex can be determined. The funerary notations from ancestor worship also suggest the initiatic death in the very act of intercourse, as is underlined by the recommended performance of this cakrapuja in the cremation ground and by the initial invocation of Kali engaged in inverted sexual union astride the corpse (*sava* = Siva) of Mahakala-Bhairava, sexual union with the deceased being optionally prescribed for the wife in certain Brahmanical funerary texts.115 The final picture that emerges is that of the deathly embryonic regression of the wholly sexualized consciousness to the base of the spine before its upward ascent towards final liberation. The blissful state of Bhairava-Anuttara thereby realized is an indescribable indeterminate fusion of the twin-state (*yamala*)of the quiescent transcendent (*santa*)and emergent immanent (*udita*)poles of the supreme consciousness. Those intent on final emancipation concentrate exclusively on the former dimension, whereas those seeking the lordship of creative (magical) powers and longevity particularly cultivate the latter aspect. This integral mode of conceiving the bio-sexual and metaphysico-spiritual dimensions of the "primordial sacrifice" has permitted the claim that a child born of such an experience (*yoginibhu*)would be endowed with the innate disposition and extraordinary aptitude for reclaiming it for himself (see n. 115).

The continuity between the trances due to possession by the lowly folk or tribal divinity accompanied by savagery and miraculous feats made possible by the enhanced regenerative capacity of the body, and

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the deliberate metaphysical identification with the awesome mystery of the absolute, also called "possession by Bhairava" (*bhairavavesa*),within the context of the Kulayaga or even independently through purely gnostic exercises, reveals itself even in the Trika retention of terms meaning "trembling, swooning," etc., which derive from that primitive base. The union of the highest gnostic Brahmans with the lowest impurest castes, associated with such public rites of possession, within the closed circles of orgiastic transgression, renders problematic any purely evolutionistic explanation of the tension within the term *avesa*,"possession." Except for the intermediate zone where the external determinations of the caste society have imposed the central image of Brahmanicide on Bhairava, the symbolic configurations at the tribal level continue to reflect the esoteric psycho-physical techniques that have conferred the highest metaphysical realization on Abhinavagupta at the summit of the Hindu universe.

Although initially distorted by a structuralizing gaze, Lévi-Strauss' Amerindian *Mythologiques*,on careful rereading, progressively reveal a shamanistic world composed of the same or similar naturalistic symbols of transgression, embryogony, nectarine honey (or maple syrup), all-devouring fire, the "symplegades" motif, ascent up the world tree through the door of heaven, etc., that could be restored to its true dimensions by a hermeneutic based on the phenomenology of transgressive sacrality. "This ecstatic experience is not in opposition to the general theory of Brahmanic sacrifice, just as the shaman's trance fits in perfectly into the cosmo-theological system of the Siberian and Altaic religions. . . . It remains to inquire if Indian religious life, as a whole and with all the symbolisms that it includes, is a creation'degraded' in a measure, in order to become accessible to the profaneproduced by a series of ecstatic experiences on the part of a few privileged persons, or if, on the contrary, the ecstatic experience of the latter is only the result of an effort toward 'interiorization' of certain cosmo-theological schemas that precede it. The problem is pregnant with consequences . . ." 116 More precisely, it would be premature to claim that the tribal symbolic order owes these common structures to a tribalizing Hindu Bhairava, when the latter could himself have been born from the fusion of numerous tribal "Bhairavas" with the symbolic projection of the Brahman(ized) diksita. The social distancing between orthodox Brahman and outcaste is only the permanent fixation of the opposition between the pure and the impure, which in primitive societies and in pre-classical Brahmanism are defined rather in terms of alternation. In predominantly tribal and less thoroughly Brahmanized

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Nepal, where, to my knowledge, the Brahmanicidal origin myth is hardly retold and the corresponding Bhairavastami not celebrated, Bhairava comes as often from Lhasa as from Varanasi; and through the transgressive mytheme of his own decapitation, he has been enthroned as national god, a public status he has yet to attain in Hindu India.

I. Mitra-Varuna and the Niravasita-Bhairava: The Royal Mahabrahmana

The dialectic of transgressive sacrality provides us with fresh insights into the complex structural transformation of the Vedic dualistic universe dominated by the opposition between the deva Indra and the asura (Mitra-)Varuna into the subsequent Hindu trinity of Brahma, Visnu, and Rudra, each of whom is in his own way a "god of the Totality." 117 The term *Asura*,used only in the singular in the earliest portions of the Rig Veda, seems to have originally referred to a "Lord" of peoples hostile to the Indra-worshipping Aryans118 and probably characterizes this Lord as endowed, like the later brahmán, with *mana*-likemagical power (maya). Although Mitra-Varuna, the Asura(s) par excellence, and the chief of the Devas, Indra, stem from two different cultural worlds, and perhaps even two opposing civilizations, they already reveal in the Vedic religion a significant structural opposition which can be defined just as well in terms of priestly "first" versus warrior "second" function or as sacred versus profane kingship.119 Mitra-Varuna is a dual divinity because it expresses the complementarity of the pure interdictory Mitraic and the impure transgressive Varunic poles of Vedic sacrality, also translated into the opposition between the upper and nether worlds of a dualistic cosmos.120 This internal opposition is retained in the later Brahma of the ritual texts, for he is primarily the mythical projection of the purohitas, the foremost among whom, the Vasisthas, are explicit incarnations (*maitravaruni*)of Mitra-Varuna.

Nevertheless, the overlapping functions of Indra and the Indian (and Iranian) Mit(h)ra, who shows the greatest reluctance to strike at Vrtra (and bears the *vazra* like Indra's vajra), requires that we replace the notion of a spatial structure defined by fixed terms with a dynamic dialectic that seeks to define each mythico-ritual entity in terms of the vectors that determine its transformations. Such a dialectic, already implicit in the pre-classical diksa, may be described as an upward movement of purification of the profane (royal) sacrificer represented by

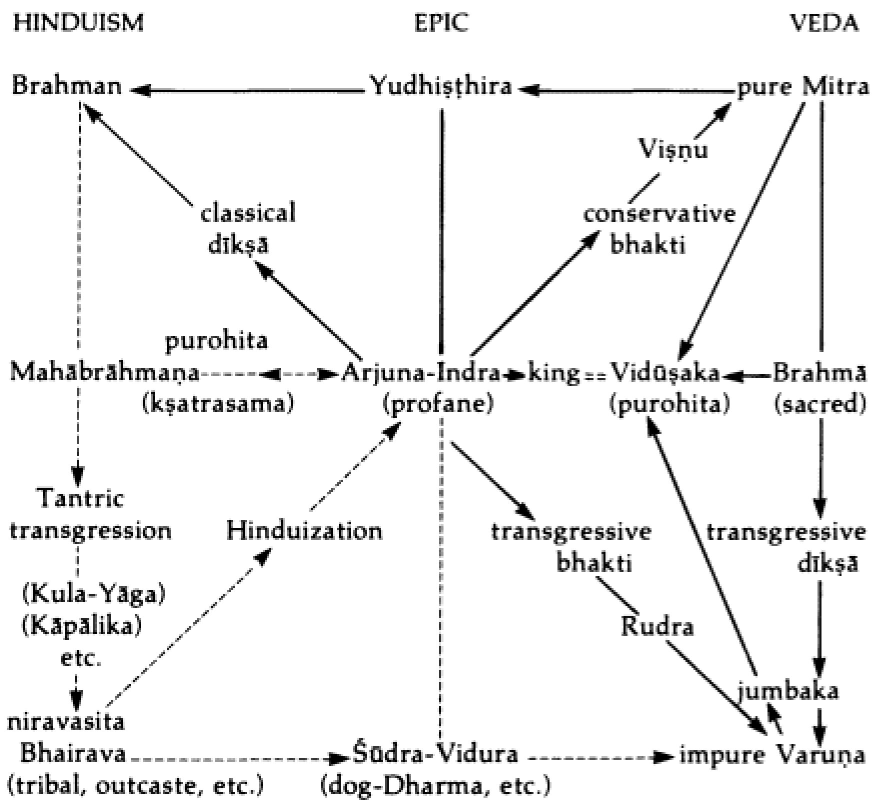
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Indra, who accedes to the sacred (only) through the mediation of the Mitraic pole of Brahma before his transgressive plunge as the diksita into the impure womb of Varuna. That this entire dialectic can be internalized within a single personage is indicated by the identification of sacrifice as Prajapati with both Brahma (officiant) and yajamana or sacrificer represented by Indra (Heesterman, IC, pp. 27, 33, 50, 94; see n. 49). The mythic interferences and the hybrid figures that correspond to them on the socio-religious level must be reduced to their ideological coordinates in order to arrive at their Hindu transformation.

Brahma represents the isolative domain of the sacred within the late Vedic cultural universe (*madhya desa*)as opposed to non-Vedic India, which it could absorb and assimilate only by expanding and reorientating its profane pole so as to counter the secularizing tendency on its geographical borders, such as gave rise to post-axial Buddhism with its separation of a revalorized profane kingship finding its apogee in the Mauryan empire and Asoka on the one hand and the exaggerated religious renunciation of the monastic order on the other. 121 Thus the Vedic Mitra practically disappears and Varuna is relegated to a subsidiary position, but without losing his embryonic associations with the subterranean waters and the demonized Asuras even in the epic (Kuiper, VV, pp. 74-93). Brahma, although omnipresent, recedes to the background along with the this-worldly mythico-ritual sacrality of the pre-classical Brahman. Instead, the gods of bhakti rise to prominence with Visnu embodying the vector uniting the profane Ksatriya with the pure pole of Brahma to generate the religious image of the king as the protector and even pivot of the socio-religious order (dharma), and Rudra incarnating the vector linking him with the transgressive pole of Brahma to generate the equally religious image of the king as the savage destroyer in the impurity of the hunt and the violence of battle.122 This explains how the model of the profane Hindu king, Arjuna son of Indra, can nevertheless be alternatively identified with Visnu-Krsna and also with Rudra-Siva.123 But if instead of Arjuna, the *Mahabharata* crowns as king the "Brahman" Yudhisthira, identified as Dharma with his impure Sudra alter ego Vidura, born "equal to Mitra-Varuna" who ruled over the earlier Vedic *rta*,this is because Yudhisthira expresses most fully the hidden (transgressively) sacred dimension of Hindu kingship that still underlies its secularized prolongation. Any total picture of Hindu kingship must necessarily integrate the sacred kingship of Yudhisthira and the profane kingship of Arjuna-Dhanañjaya as the complementary poles of a single model.124

If the Brahmanical tradition has succeeded in retaining its specific

symbolic universe and the continuity of its cultural identity even in the process of "colonizing" the subcontinent, this has, however, been achieved only at the cost of reducing the public image of the ideal Brahman to his primarily ritual (and not racial) purity so as to confer upon him the social preeminence of the world-renouncer, even while he continues his ritual traditions. This classical reform of the Vedic sacrifice is epitomized by the transformation of the transgressive pre-classical diksa into a purification of the sacrificer conferring upon him the temporary status of a Brahman. 125 The Vedic-Brahmanical universe of values occupies primarily the top-right triangle of the oversimplified transformative diagram below:



Transformation of Vedic "Dualism" into the Trinity of Hindu Bhakti

If we nevertheless find certain Hindu figurations like the *ksatrasama* (=Ksatriya) purohita beside the king, the impure sin-eating Mahabrahmana as representing the priestly Brahman, Dharma incarnated in the Sudra Vidura, and the more problematic Brahmanicide and even tribal Bhairava, projected beyond the Brahman-Varuna axis onto the lower left triangle (where the vectors are represented by broken lines) enclosing the extra-Brahmanical universe, this is because these "lawful irregularities," although they each have their Vedic counterparts on the right half of the diagram, cannot be satisfactorily accounted for by the system of values of classical Brahmanism alone. That these disconcerting projections are not mere vestiges of the pre-classical system but serve a positive function is immediately evident in the key figure of the lowly ksetrapala extra-Vedic Bhairava, who has been exalted to occupy the transgressive position corresponding to that of Varuna in Vedic religion. That Bhairava should appear in the guise of Candala is natural in view of the latter's ritual functions of being excluded (niravasita) from the village, having dogs and donkeys for his wealth, wearing the garments of the dead and carrying corpses, and appropriating the belongings (clothes, ornaments, beds) of the criminals they execute, suggesting an identification (see nn. 97-8). The underworldly seat of Varuna's cosmo-ritual rta becomes the impure foundation of the socio-religious Dharma incarnated in the Sudra Vidura and in Yudhithira's dog before the latter reveals its transgressive dimension fully as Bhairava's theriomorphic form; and all these figures retain their essential identity with Yama, Dharma-Raja, lord of Death. 126

From a purely sociological standpoint, the Mahabrahmana as funerary priest is a category which is not pure enough to be ranked as a proper Brahman, and yet not so impure, like the Dom cast in the image of Yama-Raja, as to cease being a Brahman. But I use the term Mahabrahmana here, still in accordance with Hindu usage, rather as a dialectical figure, extending to other personages like the purohita, Vidusaka, Pasupata, and even the Brahman Kapalika, who contains within himself the opposing extremes of the pure and the impure, Mitra-Varuna having become the transgressive conjunction of Brahman and outcaste. Ramanuja condemns the Kapalikas because they claimed that even a Sudra could instantly become a Brahman by receiving the diksa to ascetically undertake the Mahavrata, and the Kusle descendants of the Kapalikas play the role of Mahabrahmanas among the Newars. Even the Dom-Raja of Banaras claims descent from a *fallen* Brahman in an ancestral myth that simultaneously accounts

for the origin of the Manikarnika tank. It is in this context of lawful irregularities generated by the suppressed affinity of Brahman and outcaste, that paradoxical sociological phenomena, inexplicable in terms of a purely linear non-cyclic hierarchy, like that of (only) the lowest outcastes (Candala) being contaminated by contact with Brahmans and not accepting food even from them, must ultimately be explained. 127

The broken vectors reveal that, far from being symptomatic of the inner contradictions of the reformed classical system, its irregular projections serve as receptacles and tentacles governed by an implicit intentionality: assimilation of the non-Brahmanical universe without surrendering the continuity of Hindu identity with its roots in the Vedic Revelation. Thus we see two opposing yet complementary movements. On the one hand, there is the process of Hinduization or Sanskritization whereby tribal divinities are identified with Bhairava, who is himself whitened as he ascends the social hierarchy, just as entire groups of Sudras and even tribals can acquire sufficient power and influence to receive Ksatriya status, before receiving the purifying classical diksa to become (temporary) Brahmans. And on the other hand the tantric Brahmans, like the Kapalikas and Kaulas, descend through the diksa to identify themselves, in the midst of egalitarian transgressive rituals, with Bhairava incarnated in the niravasita-Candala.

Also revealed in the diagram is that, from a socio-religious point of view, Hindu bhakti primarily serves the historically determined function of bridging the profane with the pure and impure poles of the sacred, which, however, survives independently of bhakti in the figure of the five-headed Brahma whose fifth head is now borne by Bhairava. It is in this way that Visnu and especially Rudra-Siva, in whom the impure sacred can appear in the guise of the profane and vice versa,128 could have played a crucial role in the process of Hinduization by countering, on the religious level, the Buddhist tendency to desacralize the world in favour of renunciation and transcendence alone. Although each of the Hindu trinity occupies only one face of the triangular Vedic structure, they are all equally entitled to be gods of the totality only by symbolically incorporating the opposing apex of the triangle and thereby revealing the dialectical movement of their interlocking identities. Thus Rudra finds his purified counterpart in the ascetic and auspicious Siva, and Arjuna's very name "Bibhatsu" identifies him not only with the "Brahman" Ajatasatru but also with the white foeless Mitra disgusted at the thought of doing violence to Vrtra. Visnu, like Arjuna, finds his black Varunic counterpart in the

name Ksrna he assumes in the *Mahabharata*;and Brahma becomes profanized in the figure of the royal purohita projected as the martial Drona, or even the Brahmanized warrior Bhisma-Pitamaha. The goddess, apparently eclipsed from this male-dominated scenario, participates as the tripled consort of the trinity and finds her centre of gravity at the womb-like Varunic pole as the menstruating Krsna-Draupadi projected towards the effeminate long-haired Kesava as the auspicious Sri-Laksmi. It is no doubt for this reason that she is identified in the Newar Bhimsen temples with the blood-thirsty Bhairavi and placed between the vegetarian Arjuna and the bloody Bhima-Bhairava (see n. 5).

Just as the passive sacred kingship of Dharmaraja is overshadowed by the active central role of Arjuna-Dhanañjaya intent on the conquest of the quarters (Jaya), it is the profanized public image of the Hindu king that occupies the mediating role in our diagram not only between the synchronic opposition of the pure and the impure but also diachronically between the Vedic heartland traced by the peripatetic sacrificial black antelope and the Hindu subcontinent with its imperial South East Asian expansion. His temporal power continues to participate in the legitimizing spiritual authority of the sacred

only through the ritual bi-unity he forms with the royal purohita who always precedes him, just as the Ksatriya Parthasarathi (Krsna) stands before Partha (Arjuna) as two Krsnas on the same chariot equipped for the sacrifice of battle. 129 Unlike his royal patron who is actively involved in the mundane preoccupations of his ephmeral realm, and although apparently on the same profane level as his indispensable but polluting partner, the Brahman purohita still remains primarily a specialist of the sacred, incorporating in himself the extreme tension between the pure Mitraic and the impure Varunic poles of Brahma.

He appears problematic only because this deathly sin-eating pole has been systematically obscured in the classical image of the ideal Brahman. For the same reason, his symbolic counterpart in the deformed "Brahman par excellence" with his exaggerated (jumbaka) Varunic dimension now appears in the Sanskrit drama as the ridiculous extra-Vedic (*avaidika*)Vidusaka, with so many tantricized traits. Yet the Vidusaka, protected by Omkara, is not only a Srotriya through all his abundant Vedic symbolism. Even his sexuality reveals the triangular sacrificial dialectic: chastely warding off all the symbols of lust with his crooked stick on the one hand, and obscenely indulging in symbolic incest with the same upraised phallic kutilaka on the other, this "counsellor in the science of love" (*kamatantrasaciva*)nevertheless furthers the royal hero's marriage with the heroine, herself incarnating the

prosperity of the kingdom. 130 The (not only sexual) universalization offered to the king's profane individuality by the opposing poles of the sacred in the (brown-)monkey-like joking-companion (*narmasaciva*)is also reflected in the awesome multiform monkey-banner (*kapidhvaja*)of Arjuna's chariot, and finds its metaphysical expression in the terrifying "Universal Form" (*visvarupa*)assumed by Krsna, himself elsewhere identified with the Vedic Vrsakapi or "Virile Monkey."

Although the twin gods of bhakti occupy and even encompass the two royal or profanizing faces of the sacrificial triangle, the dialectic of transgression is impossible without the vertical dimension of the sacred in Brahma, in whom the opposing yet complementary poles of the pure and the impure are both separated and united. Indeed, not only does the dialectic of transgressive sacrality wholly encompass the universe of bhakti, it also finds independent and prior symbolic expression in the mytheme of Indra's Brahmanicide of his purohita Visvarupa.131 If Bhairava later decapitates Brahma with his left thumb-nail, he is only following the illustrious example of the ambidextrous royal Arjuna, who was not only guilty of Drona's Brahmanicide but also wielded, as Savyasacin, his infallible bow Gandiva with his unerring left hand. There has been hardly any need, until now, for an abstract Indian term corresponding to the complex concept of transgression when the Hindu vocabulary had already captured its dialectic in the vivid image of Indra's royal and Bhairava's criminal Brahmanicide, defining it with such mythico-ritual and even juridical precision. If it is Brahma's inability to create that is responsible for his decapitation by the filial Siva, this is only because the Brahmanical sacrifice is ultimately the process of winning life out of death. Although subordinated to the classical Brahman through his public image as the profane Indra, as the divine protector Visnu and even perhaps as the ascetic yogin and destructive warrior Siva-Rudra, the ambivalent Hindu king reasserts his independent magico-religious power as Lord of the Universe through his hidden tantric identity as the Brahmanicide Bhairava, but only because he thereby creatively incorporates in himself the dialectical Vedic figure of the universalizing royal Mahabrahmana.132

J. Bhairava Worship Today in North India and Nepal

Bhairava is no longer such a focus of transgressive practices as he was in the past, for his cult in India has been "Brahmanized," in the sense of purified, to such an extent that it nowadays differs little from the temple cult of any other orthodox Hindu divinity. This may be

attributed to various socio-cultural transformations, especially the political domination of proselytizing and puritanizing Islam after the 12th century, followed by the socio-economic domination of the modern rationalizing mentality that has interrupted even the process of syncretic assimilation at the folk level reflected in the cult of Ghazi Miya (see n. 101) and the Five (Muslim) Saints (Pañco Pir) in the North, in such transgressive figures as Muttal Ravuttan, alias Muhammad Khan, in the southern Draupadi cult, and in Mallu Khan's sacrilegious "pilgrimage" to Mecca in the Central Indian cult of

Mallanna. 133

Although the Brahman priests offer meat, fish, and wine on behalf of their devotees to the divinity during special (*visesa*)as opposed to "ordinary" (*samanya*)worship in the major "nuclear" temples, as in the Kalabhairava temples of Ujjain and Varanasi, and connive at animal sacrifices performed by devotees sometimes in the compound, they do not offer blood sacrifices themselves (at least publicly) at these temples. Nevertheless, the dynamic head (*mahant*)of the Kamaccha Batuka-Bhairava temple (relatively recent, it is not included in the astabhairavas of Kasi), next in popularity only to the Kala-Bhairava temple, regularly offers goat sacrifices to the renowned goddess Vindhyavasini at the Vindhyacal hills. She is guarded by Ananda, Ruru, Siddhanatha and Kapala Bhairavas to the east, north, west, and south, respectively, of the town, while Lal Bhairava stands before the police station on the main road leading to her shrine. In all these temples, offerings of limes are presented as substitutes for human sacrifice. Within the compound of the goddess herself are images of Pañcaganga, Kapala, and Kala-Bhairavas, and in April, 1986 I accompanied an all-male party led by the Mahant from Banaras in order to celebrate his restoration of the temple of Bhuta-Bhairava in the monkey-infested jungle behind the Kali temple frequented by Ojhas (spirit mediums) on the other side of Vindhyacal. The popular and influential Mahant has himself composed a "Hymn to Batuka-Bhairava" (*stotram* in Sanskrit), and is actively involved in the celebration of Bhairavastami and "Lat ka Vivah" (marriage) and other festivals at the Kalabhairava and Lat-Bhairo temples. Indeed, such is his activity that it is now rather Batuka Bhairava who plays the role of the traditional Krodhana Bhairava rather neglected in the nearby temple of the goddess Kamakhya, whose own Mahant from the Nirvani Akhada is quite ailing. Batuka is in fact the *sattvika* double of the less imposing but original Adi (Krodhana-)Bhairava in a separate room of his temple, who still receives essentially *tamasika* puja every evening on the model of the pañcamakara performed by one of the most fervent, blissfully intoxicated (unmatta), disciples with

fish, wine, meat, *puris* (mudra) and *vadas* symbolizing *mithuna*.Although the Mahant himself performed the goat sacrifice for Bhutanatha Bhairava in the forest, the party of revelers was subsequently offered two different modes of feasting (*bhoj*):vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Sometimes accompanied by a devotee seeking the fulfillment of particular desires (*kamya*-puja),he still performs solitary worship in the cremation ground of the Hariscandra ghat on the Ganga by pouring wine on the siva-linga, etc.

The founding story, retold by him, tells of an ascetic guru named something like Batuk or Siva-Ram Puri who, having quarrelled with his disciple at Allahabad, decided to settle here at Kamaccha with his image of Krodha Bhairava in order to continue his *sadhana*.There his renown grew to the point of attracting the attention of the childless Balvant Singh. The royal embryogonic dimension is thus retained in the king of Banaras receiving a blessed fruit from the sadhu to beget his successor Raja Chet Singh, and rewarding his new-found preceptor with land and properties. When the envious disciple came to rejoin his guru, the latter shed his mortal coils in a fit of anger and his *samadhi* is supposed to be beneath the shrine of the present "Original-Angry-Bhairava." The disciple, having assumed ownership of the properties, later rediscovered through a dream the image of Batuka Bhairava, which was excavated with the help of king Balavant Singh in the compound of the present temple built by the king in 1733 to commemorate the birth of his son. The present lineage of Mahants, descended from that rebellious disciple, found peace only after having observed a rigorous sadhana for seven generations before Krodhana Bhairava, who is still worshipped as (the union of?) Ananda Bhairava and Bhairavi. The mythical version of the goddess Candi having discovered Batuka-Bhairava as a child (*batu*)at the bottom of a lake during the universal dissolution (pralaya) and adopting him with compassion, which the Mahant attributes to the *Markandeya Purana*,probably reflects the initiatory scenario of the baby Krsna swallowing the eternal youth Markandeya during the pralaya. 134 Batuka is indeed considered the child of Sahasracandi, whose image is found within his sanctum.

The resilience of the cult, even quite independently of fixed institutionalized frameworks of transmission, may be judged from the example of an adept of Vikranta-Bhairava at Ujjain. Living in a modern city environment and employed in the Vikram University, he has succeeded in attracting devotees from all walks of life, including university lecturers, government officials, journalists who make it their duty to report on its evolution, etc. Although originally an exclusive

goddess-worshipper before establishing himself with his family at Ujjain, he had then visions of Bhairava and was

directed by the goddess to meditate on Vikranta-Bhairava. On the banks of backward flowing Ksipra, he kept nightlong vigils in the cremation ground beside the ruined and derelict temple of Vikranta-Bhairava on the ancient city-pilgrimage route (*pañcakrosi*)around the outskirts of the city, whose sacred geography is modelled on that of Kasi. Thereby he has acquired spiritual powers (*siddhi*)which permit him to exercise his clairvoyance *gratis* every morning for the general public that flocks to him. A regular weekly cult has now spontaneously revived at this temple, not far from the major temple of Kala Bhairava once patronized by the Maharajas, and his devotees gather there, despite its great distance, in the late evening for worship in a rather "neo-Vedic" mode with *havan*,etc. What is most interesting is that he has received no regular initiation into the worship of Bhairava, and has instructed himself into the appropriate ritual utterances (mantra), gestures (*nyasa*),mystic diagrams (yantra), procedures (paddhati), etc., only after having received his vocation through visions. However, although it is his assiduous psycho-physical discipline (sadhana) that has reanimated the cult, the transgressive element is, as far as I can tell, completely effaced.

But the original character of Bhairava worship may be appreciated much better by balancing this picture with his various roles in Nepal, where he has always enjoyed Hindu royal patronage, first under the Licchavis like the famous Amsuvarman, then under the Newar Mallas, and now under the Gorkha Shahs, patrons of the syncretizing Nath cult. During the Bhairavi Rath Jatra festival, 135 the dhami of Nuwakot is possessed by, or rather becomes, Bhairava, and his wife likewise incarnates Bhairavi who has an important temple there and is said to have conferred the Nepal Valley upon her devotee, the Gorkha conqueror Prithvi Narayan Shah, creator of modern Nepal. The entire Newar community, with tribals from distant parts and the onlooking Gorkha people, participates in this Hindu festival, officiated over especially by Brahman Buddhist priests who now come all the way from Kathmandu. It climaxes in the sacrifice, especially when the "Sindur Procession" reaches Devi-Ghat on the confluence of the Tadhi and the Trisuli-Ganga, of numerous goats and buffaloes, from whose gushing throats the dhami as Bhairava gulps down the fresh blood, just like the Bhairava dancer during the "Nine Goddess" (Navadurga) dances of Bhaktapur. Then, before the shrine of Jalpa Devi at the confluence and in secret before the representative of the king of Nepal, he proclaims oracles for the entire kingdom which are then communi-

cated to the king. Once in twelve years the dhami visits the king at Kathmandu in order to receive a new set of ritual attire and insignia. Pacali Bhairab himself is often represented in myth as a king with impure traits, sometimes from Varanasi or Lhasa, who had the habit of frequenting the cremation ground beside the Bagmati (-Ganga) before becoming petrified there after wrapping himself in a funeral mat (see n. 96). At Bhaktapur it is the used funeral mat of the highest Brahman, the rajapurohita, that serves as the canvas for painting the ritual mask of Akash Bhairab that is affixed on the outer wall of his temple to receive public worship (see n. 132).

The Buddhist Mahakala used to fly, it is said, between Kasi and Lhasa, but was immobilized in mid-air by a powerful Tibetan Lama and forced to settle down at the edge of the Tundikhel royal parade ground. "In his role as defender and guardian, Mahakala is one of the chief protectors of all the other Valley gods, a task he shares with Sankata Bhairava of Te-bahal, Kathmandu. In the Kathmandu Valley, representations of Mahakala rarely conform to his textual description, and often incorporate aspects that are rightly those of other divinities: Samvara, Hevajra, and Heruka, emanations of Aksobhya. Conceptually related to Bhairava, from whom he probably derives, the Buddhist deity is teamed with Bhairava in practice, shares some aspects of his iconography, and the name Mahakala, one of Bhairava's epithets. Like Bhairava, too, Nepalis conceive of Mahakala as a pitha *devata*,the temple of the Tundikhel Mahakala, Kathmandu, for example, representing his pitha, which is paired with a companion *deochem* inside the town. Thus it is often difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the two deities. Iconographically, even the famous Kala Bhairava of the Kathmandu Darbar Square conforms as much to Samvara as to Bhairava." 136 The spontaneity with which Tibetan pilgrims make it a point to venerate this Kala Bhairab at Hanuman Dhoka is no doubt due to this identification. It is significant that the Newar Vajracaryas, for whom Bhairava is to all appearance not the kuladevata, are nevertheless custodians of his secrets and sometimes even central officiants at his public cult for the Hindu community.137 Particularly venerated within the Gelugpa sect, the Vajra-Bhairava mentioned in an inscription of Sivadeva II is another name of the fierce Yamantaka, and the history of his lineage worship is found in the Tibetan text entitled "Jam-Doyangs Bzhao-Pai Rdorje," where the revelation is attributed to Mahasiddha Lalitavajra of Uddyana. The Kasi-Lhasa axis so constant in the Newar ethnography of Bhairava is probably to be explained by Tibetan Buddhism having played, after his original adoption from Hindu India, a preponderant

role in the spread of his cult in Nepal.

Also known as Adalata (Court) Bhairava, the towering black solitary image of Kala Bhairab before the palace gate at Hanuman Dhoka was the chief witness before whom government servants were annually sworn into office, a function that corresponds perfectly to his now practically defunct role of policeman-magistrate of Kasi. Litigants and accused criminals also swore while touching Bhairava's foot, and he who bore false witness vomited and died on the spot. As late as the nineteenth century he was the occasional recipient of human sacrifices, such as (Mitra-) Varuna had earlier demanded in order to paradoxically maintain the awesome rta hidden firmly within the heart of the Vedic socio-cosmic order. 138 Although much of the symbolism surrounding Bhairava is no longer understood even by his most ardent devotees and the cult itself is being rapidly effaced, one has only to replace these symbols in their original context to recognize the transgressive mode of sacrality that inspires them. And although this symbolic constellation, an integral part of the galaxy of criminal gods and demon devotees, is typically and in many of its elements exclusively Indian, it is the vehicle of a dialectic of transgression that flourishes under different modalities in archaic and primitive religions and is not wholly absent in the other world religions. Increasingly claimed to be both historically and principally *the* original sacred, this ideology assumes in India the form of the terrifying Bhairava to pose awkward questions that we modernists, as ethical and rational humanists, would have no doubt preferred to leave unanswered, had not the secular counter-sciences of anthropology, psychoanalysis, and linguistics converged in the ever-widening and deepening archaeology of contemporary *scientia* to insistently proclaim with Michel Foucault the inevitable and imminent dissolution of an already shrunken Man.

Notes

1. This greatly expanded revised version of my paper "Adepts of the god Bhairava in the Hindu tradition," presented to the Assembly of the World's Religions, 15-21 November 1985 (New York), will appear with further revisions in Sunthar and Elizabeth Visuvalingam, *Transgressive Sacrality in the Hindu Tradition*,Transgressive Sacrality Series vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Rudra Press). I am grateful to Harvey Paul Alper for having presented this version to the pilot conference on "Transgressive Sacrality in the Hindu Tradition," 15th Annual Conference on South-Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 8 November 1986. I thank my husband, Sunthar Visuvalingam, for having provided the

basic interpretative framework for my materials on the Bhairava cult and for allowing me to use his unpublished materials on the Vidusaka. Thanks are also due to Hélène Brunner-Lachaux and F. B. J. Kuiper for detailed criticisms of this and earlier versions of the paper, and to Alf Hiltebeitel for his patient editing.

2. See P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*,2nd ed., Govt. Oriental Series (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1973), IV.10-31; 87-96 (expiations); II (1974), 147-151. The numerous versions of this Brahmasiraschedaka myth from the Puranas can be found assembled and partly analyzed in the following five works: H. von Stietencron, "Bhairava," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (= ZDMG), Supplementa I, Part 3 (1969), 863-71; W. D. O'Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva* (1973; rpt. Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), 123-7, and *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 277-86; S. Kramrisch, *The Presence of Siva* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 250-300; E. Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*: *A Goddess of Tamilnadu*, *Her Myths and Cult*,Beiträge zur Südasienforschung, Südasien Institut, Heidelberg University, vol. 107 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), esp. 36-8, 158-215 (kapparai = Brahma's head).

3. See D. Lorenzen, *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*: *Two Lost Saivite Sects* (Delhi: Thomson Press, 1972); J. P. Parry, "Sacrificial Death and the Necrophagous Ascetic," in *Death and the Regeneration of Life*,ed. M. Bloch and J. Parry (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), 74-110 and "The Aghori Ascetics of Benares" in *Indian Religion*,ed. R. Burghart and A. Cantlie (London: Curzon Press, & N. York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 51-78; G. W. Briggs, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis* (1938; rpt. Motilal Banarsidass, 1982), 218-27, 159-61; G. Unbescheid, *Kanphata*: *Untersuchungen zu Kult*, *Mythologie und Geschichte Sivaitischer Tantriker in Nepal*,Beiträge zur Südasienforschung, Südasien Institut, Heidelberg University, vol. 63 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980).

4. In the Hindi film "Bhairavi of the Netherworld," (*Patala-Bhairavi*),which played all over Northern India around 1985, the tantric adept seeks magical powers through human sacrifice to the goddess. The manner in which the unwitting hero-apprentice tricks the would-be Nepali executioner into himself becoming the victim corresponds exactly to one of the founding legends of the Nava Durga cult of Bhaktapur, itself associated with human sacrifice, recorded by G. Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwars du Népal* (Paris: Centre National de la Récherche Scientifique, 1984), 468-69. Although the message of the film is modern and recommends the rejection of such dangerous powers, the scenario is the stereotyped traditional one.

5. M. Anderson, *Festivals of Nepal* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971), 235; Bhimasena's twelve-yearly visit to Lhasa in the form of a Newar farmer, is linked with their embryonic thirteenth year of exile (p. 238). The impure aspects of the menstruating Krsna are very well described in A. Hiltebeitel, "Draupadi's Hair," *Autour de la Déesse Hindoue*,ed. M. Biardeau, *Purusartha 5*,179-214.

6. G. D. Sontheimer, *Biroba*, *Mhaskoba und Khandoba*: *Ursprung*, *Geschichte und*

Umwelt von Pastoralen Gottheiten in Maharastra,Schriftenreihe der Südasien-Institut der Universitatät Heidelberg, vol. 21 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1976); G. S. Nepali, *The Newars*: *An Ethno-Sociological Study of a Himalayan Community* (Bombay: United Asia Publ., 1959), 298-305.

7. Kubernath Sukul, *Varanasi-Vaibhav* (Patna: Bihar Rastrabhasa Parisad, 1977), 102-7 (in Hindi); D. L. Eck, *Banaras*: *City of Light* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 189-201; E. Visuvalingam, "Bhairava: Kotwal of Varanasi," in *Varanasi Through the Ages*,ed. T. P. Verma et al., Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalan Samiti Publ., no. 4 (Varanasi: BISS, 1986), 241-60.

8. See N. Gutschow, *Stadtraum und Ritual der newarischen Städte im Kathmandu Tal*: *Eine architekturanthropologische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1982), 50-53; M. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*: *A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), vol. I, 328, 345-6; Toffin, *Société et Religion*,441-2, 458-66; J. F. Vézies, *Les Fêtes Magiques du Nepal* (Paris: Cesare Rancillo, 1981), 26-7. For Maharashtra, see Sontheimer, *Biroba*,97, 192. For Airlines emblem, see Vézies, 70, 162; Anderson, *Festivals*,151.

9. For Bhaktapur, see Gutschow, 63, 96-102; Slusser, 347-8; for Patan, see Anderson, 145; Vézies, 65-66.

10. J. K. Locke, *Karunamaya*: *The Cult of Avalokitesvara/Matsyendranatha in the Valley of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Centre of Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan Univ., 1980), 427-36. Although patronized chiefly by the farmer (Jyapu) caste, the regular officiants at the Bagh Bhairab temple of Kirtipur (Nepali, *Newars*,301-2, linking it to the Baghoba or Vaghdeo of Maharashtra) and the original Pachali Bhairab at Pharping (my fieldwork in Sept.-Oct. 85) are Kusles. For the problematic relation, between the Kusles and the Kanphatas, see Unbescheid, *Kanphata*,130-51.

11. There are Jaina tantric texts, like the *Bhairavapadmavatikalpa* (1047 A.D.) of Mallisena (Mysore), dealing with transgressive Bhairava-type rituals of black magic, which need to be reconciled with the exaggerated role of ascetic self-denial and non-violence in Jaina orthodoxy. With Mahanatha for her Bhairava, the Hindu Purnesvari also received Jaina worship and the ritual founding of her pitha is described in the *Sripadmavatipujana*,a Sakta treatise.

12. "The god of the great temple of pilgrimage iswhatever be his name and his myththe pure god, withdrawn into himself, the god of ultimate salvation. His most "terrible" forms are besides considered at the limit to be not proper for the cult, because dangerous even for the devotees. They are relegated to the most inaccessible sites, surrounded with all kinds of taboos, pacified with appropriate offerings. . . . In short, even though the god is the master of the universe of which the temple is the centre, he does not have *hic et nunc* a direct function of protector. This is delegated to an inferior god, Bhairava being the protector of territoryksetrapalain his classic form. The principal sanctuary does not pretend to represent the god in his supreme form*contradictio in terminis*but suggests to the maximum his renunciate nature as the

final reason of the world"; M. Biardeau, *L'Hindouisme*: *Anthropologied'une Civilization* (Paris: Flammarion, 1981), 149 (author's translation).

13. F. A. Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*: *The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 197. While reporting on the secret Kaula (Bhairava-) cakrapuja being performed in the Jagannatha temple, Marglin (p. 218) refers to the rumors of a secret underground chamber located beneath the inner sanctum, pointing out parallels of cakrapujas being performed below the sanctum elsewhere (p. 328, n. 4); there is one, now in disuse, in the Banaras Aghori ashram. During our pilgrimage (June 1985) to Badrinath, the Rawal himself confirmed that there was a "*bhairavi-cakra*"beneath the main image, and J. C. Galey informs me (oral communication, Feb. 1986) that formerly the king used to ride to battle wearing the arm-band of Bhairava supposedly kept beneath the image of Badrinath. Such facts only serve to reinforce my earlier solution to the riddle "Bhairava: Policeman, Criminal or Supreme Divinity of Transgression?" (Kotwal, 257-9) that Bhairava is indeed the ultimate form of Visvanath. This article aims to demonstrate this from the perspective of transgressive sacrificial embryogony.

14. There are three basic iconographic representations of Bhairava which derive from this myth. As Brahmasiraschedaka he grasps by its hair the severed head whose dripping blood is greedily lapped up by his dog. As Kankalamurti he is shown spearing a man or already bearing the latter's corpse (or skeleton) on his shoulder. In both cases, he is either naked or wearing a tiger or elephant skin, a garland of human skulls, snakes around his neck and arms, and is grotesque with dark-skin and monstrous fangs. Third, as the milder Bhiksatanamurti he roams begging for alms (from the wives of the Seven Sages in the Daru forest).

15. G. S. Ghurye, *Indian Sadhus*,2nd ed. (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1964), 103ff; Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,46; S. Sinha and B. Saraswati, *Ascetics of Kashi*: *An Anthropological Exploration* (Varanasi: N. K. Bose Memorial Foundation, 1978), 93; Swami Sadananda Giri, *Society and Sannyasin*: *A History of the Dasanami Sannyasins* (Rishikesh: Sadananda Giri, 1976), 21 (for list of *madhis*).See Briggs, *Gorakhnath*,10-11, for Gudara, "the Aughar sect of Saivites founded by a Dasnami by the name of Brahmagiri, through the favour of Gorakhnath, who is said to have invested the ascetic with his ear-rings" (cf. also Ghurye, 107). The spear emblem of the Mahanirvani Akhada is known as Bhairavaprakasa (Ghurye, 105; Giri, 27) and, according to Briggs, the Dasanamis, who were "special devotees of Bhairava" (p. 12, n. 4), also wore the *hal matanga* cord of the Kanphata Yogis. Bhairava is indicated by a black dot and line (respectively, between and below two curved red horizontal lines indicating Hanuman), in the tika of a Dasanami (loc. cit.)

16. Ghurye, *Indian Sadhus*,108. According to one of the informants of Sinha and Saraswati, *Ascetics*,93-4, "there are sixty-four Madhis among the Shaiva Samnyasis of which the Dasanamis have fifty-two Madhis and the Nathpanthis have twelve, Barahpanthi as they [the Naths] call themselves. It is

interesting that on the samadhi of Bhartrhari, located in the fort of Chunar, the Nathpanthis and the ascetics of Joona Akhara officiate by turn as priest and Mahanta. From the list of the Mahantas of the samadhi, it transpires that in the line of Munnanath, Kangalinath, Jakhanath, and Tulsinathall Nathpanthiscame Kamalananda Bharati and Jagadananda Girithe Dasanami. At present, a disciple of Jagadananda Giri is acting as the priest of the samadhi while a disciple of Sandhyanath stays there and gets a share of the collections. All these point to a tradition that brings the Nagas closer to the Nathpanthi Yogis."

17. E. Visuvalingam, "Kotwal," 247 (see n. 7). Among the other Bhairavas of Haridwar, the Kala Bhairava temple just before the Bilvakesvara Mahadeva, although still officiated by a (female) Nath, has fallen into the possession of the Ananda Akhada. The Kala-Bhairava shrine (facing a Batuka Bhairava shrine), within the Pasupatinath Mahadeva temple now belonging to the Nirañjani Akhada, was (re-?)installed by a problematic Sravannath, and the Nirañjani Akhada is itself located further downstream on the Sravannath Ghat.

18. *Abhinavagupta and the Synthesis of Indian Culture*,ed. S. Visuvalingam, Kashmir Shaiva Series (Cambridge, Mass.: Rudra Press, forthcoming). For a preliminary discussion, see especially his paper presented to the national seminar (Srinagar, 20-24 September 1986) on "The Significance and Future of Kashmir Shaivism," appearing in the same volume.

19. "O Death (= Time)! do not cast thy gaze most terrible with anger on me; (for) steadfast in the service of Samkara and ever meditating on him, I am the terrifying power of Bhairava!" *Bhairavastaka*,v. 4. Cf. L. Silburn, *Hymnes de*

Abhinavagupta (Paris: Institut de Civilization Indienne, 1970), 48, *50, 53*.Also S. Kramrisch, *Presence*,281-87.

20. See n. 2. The variations bear on a number of points like the father-son relationship between Brahma and Rudra, presence or absence of Visnu, direct decapitation by Rudra or indirectly through Bhairava, the ascetic or transgresive connotation of Brahma's fifth head, and so on. In one version, the beheading episode is preceded by that of the emergence of the cosmic linga. I give below only an abridged and simplified rerendering of the *Kurmapurana* version.

21. See S. Visuvalingam in this volume. I thank the Government of India, first the Ministry of Education and Culture, then the University Grants Commission, for having consistently supported this research, which I am presently continuing with the Romain Rolland fellowship from the French Government. I also thank Niels Gutschow, Corneille Jest, Charles Malamoud, André Padoux, and Gérard Toffin for their interest in my work.

22. Despite its general associations with ritual purity, the formless Omkara, who assumes (human) form to laughingly reconfirm the eternal sexual biunity (mithuna) or twin (yamala) nature of Siva, is itself already identified as a Mithuna (sexed couple) in *Chandogya Upaniad* (I.1.6). The conceptions of mithuna

and yamala are indissociable in tantric doctrine and practice as attested to particularly by the *Yamala* group of Tantras, subdivided into *Brahma-*, *Rudra-*, *Jayadratha-* and other Yamalas. "Internal evidence suggests that the Yamalas were produced by circles which developed a tendency towards Saktism. P. Ch. Bagchiperhaps exaggeratedlycredits the authors of the Yamalasby tradition they were the eight Bhairavas, manifestations of Sivawith some important new developments, among which are the Sakta orientation and the rendering accessible of their sadhana to non-Brahmans"; see T. Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*,Handbuch der Orientalistik, Zweite Ableitung, vol. 4, 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 22; cf. 11.

23. For the oppositional identity of Yama and Kala-Bhairava, expressing that between (the ritualization of) natural and (the lived experience of) initiatic death, see my "Kotwal," 253-56, and Stein, n. 89 *infra*.Yamantaka is likewise identical with Yama; Stein, *Dictionnaires des Mythologies* (offprint; Paris: Flammarion, 1981), 5. In fact, originally Yama himself seems to have had an initiatory function as in the Naciketas legend, which he would have retained in his later role of Dharmaraja.

24. J. Deppert, *Rudra's Geburt*: *Systematische Untersuchungen zum Inzest in der Mythologie der Brahmanas*,Beiträge zur Südasien-Forschung, Südasien-Institut, Heidelberg University, vol. 28 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), p. 129, n. 1, rightly links the stuck-fast head of Brahma to the "rolling head" of the Vedic Namuci, decapitated by Indra, and underlines the parallelisms with the Amerindian mythology treated by Lévi-Strauss, where the all-devouring, polluting head is again sometimes transformed into the moon (Soma). It would be interesting to attempt to reinterpret Lévi-Strauss' "transformation" in the light of this analysis of the (transgressive) significance of the *Brahmasiras* (see nn. 27 and 116 below). For Visvaksena, see Deppert, 283-84.

25. The incessant resounding of the dancing Bhairava's anklet bells can still be heard at a certain spot in Kañci. See R. Dessigane, P. Z. Pattabiramin and J. Filliozat, *Les Légendes Çivaites de Kañcipuram*: *Analyse de textes et iconographie*,Publications d'IFI no. 27 (Pondicherry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1964), items no. 40 and no. 49, p. 44, no. 65 (p. 95).

26. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,74-81, 92-95; Stietencron, "Bhairava," 867; O'Flaherty, *Origins of Evil*,285; (see nn. 3 and 2).

27. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,82-3, 90-2. See W. D. O'Flaherty, *Sexual Metaphors and Animal Symbols in Indian Mythology* (1980, rpt. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), 17-61 on sexual fluids. A reanalysis of the mythico-ritual complex centred on honey in South America and on its equivalent maple-syrup in North America in the light of the psycho-physical techniques employed for the "alchemical" production of "nectar" (amrta) in the Tibetan traditions interpreted by R. A. Stein will no doubt reveal a universal "Soma-doctrine" exploiting radical impurities like menstrual blood (see nn. 24 and 116). See C. Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques II*: *Du Miel aux Cendres* (Paris: Plon, 1967) and *Introduction to a Science of Mythology III*: *The Origin of Table Manners* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 412-22.

28. See S. Visuvalingam's section B. in this volume. Also J. Parry, "Death and Cosmogony in Kashi," *Contributions to Indian Sociology*,15, Nos. 1 and 2 (1981), 361; "Sacrificial Death," pp. 80 and 102, n. 14; see n. 3 *supra*.

29. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,17, 76-87; cf., Briggs, 108-9.

30. For the mahapatakas, see Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*,IV, 10-31, and II, 757ff. for food pollution.

31. Biardeau, in M. Biardeau and C. Malamoud, *Le Sacrifice dans l'Inde Ancienne*,Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Réligieuse, vol. LXXIX (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), 100-2.

32. Cf. E. Visuvalingam, "Kotwal," 257. For this equivocal logic of polarized values proper to myth but which is necessarily reduced and fragmented in their translation or development into sectarian and especially rationalizing philosophical thought, see J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Sussex: Harvester Press; New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), chaps. 7 and 9, and especially 239-40.

33. The best analysis of the complex structural relation between Brahma, Visnu, and Rudra in terms of the Brahmanical sacrifice is found in Biardeau, *Le Sacrifice*,89-106; *L'Hindouisme*,107-8; and *Dictionnaire des Mythologies* (Flammarion: offprint, no date) on "Visnu/Siva: Dieux suprêmes de la *bhakti* hindoue" (134-8).

34. For the universally fundamental character of the blood-taboo, see L. Makarius, *Le Sacré et la Violation des Interdits* (Paris: Payot, 1974), 22 and *passim*.

35. The non-dualistic Saivism of Kashmir has borrowed and inherited many elements like its cosmological schemas from earlier Pañcaratra schools prevalent in that region. Cf. A. Eschmann, "Varaha and Narasimha" and "Narasimha's Relation to Saivism and Tribal Cults" in *Cult of Jagannatha* 101-6, also 175 (see n. 86 *infra*).

36. Walter F. Otto, *Dionysos*: *Le Mythe et le Culte* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1969), 211-17; Marcel Detienne, *Dionysos mis à Mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 204, and *Dionysos à Ciel Ouvert* (Paris: Hachette, 1986), 31-3, 98. Cf. also the problem of the Dionysiac Hyacinth, whose tomb lay beneath the statue of Apollo at Amyklai; Agamemnon's sacrifice to Dionysos in the sanctuary of Apollo; Delphos, eponym of Delphi, born from the union of Apollo with Thyia who first served Dionysos and gave her name to the Thyiades who led their furious dances on Parnassus for both Dionysos and Apollo (Otto, *loc*. *cit*.).See also W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*: *The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983), 123ff. The extent to which Dionysos can be (re-)interpreted in the light of the dialetic of transgressive sacrality and the symbolic configuration it has assumed around the figure of Siva-Bhairava (see Detienne, 1986, p. 7) may be judged from S. Visuvalingam's Section A. in this volume.

37. Otto, *Dionysos*,217, 151. In the *Bacchantes* of Euripides, Tiresias, the hoary Bacchant, belongs to Apollo, the other great god of Thebes, and alone among those close to Pentheus, he will be spared the animosity of Dionysos: "without

outraging Phoibos, he honours Bromios, the Great God (*Megas Theos*)"(Detienne, 1986, 46). "Finally theological speculation even identified them" (Otto, 212; cf. also Detienne, 1986, 92).

38. For the two poles, pathological and divine, of the Greek *mania* and its Dionysiac character, see Vernant in J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Mythe et Tragédie II* [henceforth MT II], (Paris: La Découverte, 1986), 18, 40 (wine), 241 (Rohde), 245, 260-7; criticized by Detienne, 1986, p. 108, n. 79; cf. also Otto, *Dionysos*,101, 132-6; and Burkert, *Homo Necans*,p. 184, n. 25. Like Dionysos, Bhairava is even identified with the wine that flows freely in the tantric orgies; see Otto, 107-8, and ch. 12; Detienne, 1986, 45-66. It is the thread of transgressive sacrality that holds together the semantic fluctuations of the term *unmatta* meaning "drunk," "mad," even "foolish" and especially "ecstatically joyful." For the reductionist rationalism underlying the procedures of exclusion that finally made possible the modern endeavor to "capture" folly by clinically objectivizing its abnormal manifestations, see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*: *a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*,2nd ed. (London: Tavistock, 1971). For the confrontation of psychoanalysis and "enigmatic folly," see *Transgressive Sacrality in the Hindu Tradition* (see n. 1).

39. See Otto, *Dionysos*,chaps. 3 and 16, for the intimate links of Semele (and Aphrodite) with the consort of Dionysos,

Ariadne, who also dies during pregnancy and lies at Argos in the underground sanctuary of the "Cretan" Dionysos (190-7; Detienne, 1986, p. 105, n. 45). Ariadne has also affinities with the humid element and the ocean, from which Aphrodite was born.

40. E. Visuvalingam, "Kotwal" (see n. 7), 254; and 255-6 for bhairavi-yatana; 257-60 for "purification," which may be understood rather as the re-inscription of transgression in a sacralizing symbolic order. See also Eck, *Banaras*,324-44. Cf. O'Flaherty, *Origins of Evil*,167, on Indra; see n. 2.

41. These secret traditions are being divulged only because the traditional pujaris, who have recently been dispossessed of their rights in the Visvanatha temple, now feel freer to speak about them, especially as they also fear that these rites have been discontinued.

42. For the variations of this formula, but based on the same principle of ascending interdictions and descending transgressions, see Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* (see n. 2) V, pt. 2, p. 1076, n. 1744. For an informed discussion, see Abhinavagupta, *Tantraloka* IV.24, 247-53 (with commentary). The Kapalika's Brahmanhood is suggested by the legal exception that a Brahman (alone) may kill a Brahman.

43. Kramrisch, 264; O'Flaherty, *Asceticism*,126; Meyer, *Ankaaparamecuvari*,166-7, 36 (on malicious laughter); 37, 161-5 (on greed); see n. 2.

44. Makarius, *Le Sacré*,282, 287 (see n. 34). Cf. the various instances classified in Dayak under *djeadjea* "acts contrary to nature" in R. Caillois, *L'Homme et le Sacré*,2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), 100-1, and in C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté* (1967; rpt. Paris: Mouton, 1971), 567-8. For the symbolic

equivalence of noisemaking, eclipses, incest, unruliness, and polychromy, see Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*: *Introduction to a Science of Mythology* I (1970; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 312 and *passim*.

45. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,75; Deppert, 102-3.

46. See G. K. Bhat, *The Vidusaka* (Ahmedabad: The New Order Book Co., 1959), 51, 258, for the donkey-voiced Vaikhanasa of the *Kaumudimahotsava*;127, 247, for Vasantaka's blasphemous lying in the *Ratnaval*.The most learned Srotriyas of the Veda were barred by the legal codes from giving witness at trials. For Dionysos' links with the ass, see Otto, *Dionysos*,179; see n. 36.

47. Information and photocopy of relevant pages of manuscript by courtesy of Dr. G. J. S. (Alexis) Sanderson, Oxford.

48. In Rajasekhara's *Karpuramañjari* where Kapiñjala, serving as "courtjester" (Bhat, *Vidusaka*,135), finally officiates as the priest in the king's wedding brought about by the grace of Bhairavananda.

49. By J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*: *Essays in Indian Ritual*, *Kingship and Society* [henceforth IC] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 45-58, on the central human head of the *Agnicayana*.

50. Sunthar Visuvalingam, "Abhinavagupta's Conception of Humour: Its Resonances in Sanskrit Drama, Poetry, Hindu Mytholgy and Spiritual Praxis," Diss. Banaras Hindu University (1983).

51. See G. U. Thite, "Significances of the *Diksa*," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 51 (1971), 163-73, for the "Brahmanization" (of even the Ksatriya Indra) through the diksa (169) as "purification" (171-2). See esp. *infra* n. 125. In Deppert, *Rudra's Geburt* (see n. 24), pp. lvi, 56, 82, 90, the contradiction between the apparent purification and the (symbolic) incest has led to the false assumption that the latter mahapataka represents the symbolic exaggeration of Brahmanical ritual purity, unfortunately undermining the basic argument of this otherwise most original and stimulating book.

52. J. C. Heesterman, "Vratya and Sacrifice," *Indo-Iranian Journal*,6 (1962), 1-37; and also his paper on "The Notion of Anthropophagy in Vedic Ritual," presented to the pilot conference on "Transgressive Sacrality in the Hindu Tradition"; also IC, 40, 86, 92, 227 n. 46 (see nn. 1 and 49). The problem of the warrior-Brahman pointing to vratya-circles (ibid., 3, 106) is retained in the aggressively militant (*atatayin*)Brahman who seems to point to Kapalika-type circles, and the

Dharmasastras are obsessed by the question whether slaying such a Brahman, who has otherwise no place in their official system of values, constitutes a Brahmanicide requiring expiation (p. 162). Cf. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* (see n. 2), II, 148-151; III (1973), 517-8; IV, 19, where the possibility of the atatayin being full of tapas and expert in Vedic lore is raised.

53. In this case, it would have also been connected with Indra's pole (dhvaja) festival celebrated around the New Year; F. B. J. Kuiper, *Varuna and Vidusaka*: *On the Origin of the Sanskrit Drama* [henceforth VV] (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co., 1979), 134-7, 30. Kramrisch, *Presence*,250-1, 294-5; Deppert,

Rudra's *Geburt*,3-6, 81-93, 265-284 (myths 1-4, 10); see nn. 2 and 24. The term *Astaka* indicates originally the eighth lunar day of the dark half of the month, and later especially of the months of Margasirsa, Pausa, and Magha, as a time particularly appropriate for the performance of funerary rites (sraddha). Because the year began in ancient times on the full moon of Magha, its eighth, considered even younger than the beginning of the year and marked by the first and most important festival, was called *Ekastaka*,the wife of the Year, when those undertaking the *Samvatsarasattra* should undergo the diksa; Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* (see n. 2) IV, 353-6, n. 805; V. 1,660. In *Atharvaveda* III, 10, *Ekastaka*,the day of Indra's birth (v. 12), is sung not only as the mother of Indra and Soma but also as the daughter of Prajapati (v. 13), apparently replacing the Usas of the Vedic New Year (Deppert, *Rudra*'s *Geburt*,190).

54. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas* (see n. 3), 2, 13, 27, 41, 54-5 *Mattavilasa*,60 *Prabodhacandrodaya*,esp. 80-1.

55. Kramrisch, *Presence*,257-9; Makarius, *Le Sacré* (for transgressive magic).

56. See G. Dumézil, *Mythe et Épopée I*: *L'Idéologie des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-eruopéens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 191-203, 213-20, 253 [henceforth ME I); M. Biardeau, "Études de Mythologie Hindoue [henceforth EMH]: Bhakti et Avatara," part IV, vol. LXIII (1976), p. 124 n. 1, p. 212 n. 2; and part V, vol. LXV (1978), 121-5, 151-5 for its equivalence to the *Pasupatastra* obtained by Arjuna from Rudra, both parts in *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient* (Paris); Kramrisch, *Presence*,257-9.

57. Although it is Dhrstadyumna who actually decapitates Drona, the Kañci myth makes Arjuna absolve himself of the Brahmanicide at its Kapalamocanalike Caruvatirtha, just as Asvatthaman does for his foeticide (Dessigane et al., *Légendes Çivaite*,62; see n. 25). It is through Sukra's Brahmanicide, identified with his consumption of wine and "hair" (=kaca), that Brhaspati's son Kaca wins the secret of immortality in the stomach-womb of the demoniac purohita.

58. Kramrisch, *Presence*,262; O'Flaherty, *Sexual Metaphors*,213-32.

59. As major transgressions (mahapataka), Brahmanicide and incest must be equated rather than opposed, as by Deppert (*supra* n. 51). Although from the orthodox psychoanalytic point of view, the parricide is the means to incest, transgressive sacrality even goes to the point of identifying the decapitation itself with incest as in the case of Parasurama's matricide replacing his Brahman mother Renuka's head with that of an Untouchable woman. In the sacrificial ideology, it is the Brahman officiant himself who assumes the maternal role of giving (re-) birth to the sacrificer (Heesterman).

60. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,28; 42, 48 (Samkara); P. Jash, *History of Saivism* (Calcutta: Roy and Chaudhury, 1974), 65-6. For their links with Vedic Soma sacrifice, see Lorenzen and S. Visuvalingam in this volume.

61. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,9, 12, 18-19, 107, 151, 173. For the Pasupata-vow, see Kramrisch, *Presence*,257-9, 290-1.

62. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,167; see 155-6, 158, 164, cf. 67; for the Vedic affilia-

tion of Pasupatas, see 103, 105, 114, 131, 142-3, 149, 151 (Honnaya), 156, 161-4. Bhagwan Deshmukh's lecture on epigraphic evidence of Kalamukha activity in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra, cited in *Times of India* (13th Jan., 1985), mentions two such ascetics supervising the construction of temples dedicated to Siva in the form of

Virabhadra and Kalabhairava. Daksa's beheading by the former is a multiform of Bhairava's decapitation of Brahma. Yamunacarya's and Ramanuja's confusion of the two sects in order to discredit the Kalamukhas (Lorenzen, 4-6) probably also reflects their perception of this continuity.

63. Heesterman, IC, p. 27; "Vratya," p. *15*.

64. Biardeau, EMH IV, 231-6 (Bhima); EMH V, 116, 121-4 (Arjuna). For the "Brahmanization" of the ideal Kautilyan king through his basic qualification of "victory over the senses" which would have no doubt sublimated his petty self-interest into a dharmic imperialism (*vijigisa*),see Heesterman, IC, 131-2.

65. Biardeau EMH IV, 237-8. For Yudhisthira, see Dumézil, ME 1, 152-4; Biardeau, EMH IV, 231 (birth from Dharma); EMH V, 88, 94-119, for a systematic contrast between Yudhisthira's and Arjuna's respective claims to the status of ideal king, that is nevertheless heavily weighted in favour of Arjuna's royal bhakti. Hence see n. 124.

66. David D. Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 226; see 218-235. For the identification of diksita and victim in the Asvamedha, see S. Visuvalingam's section B in this volume.

67. Shulman, ibid., 256-75, where, however, only the "chastity" of Brhannada has been underlined. See esp. Biardeau, EMH IV, 207-8; V, 187-200 (see n. 56); Hiltebeitel, "Siva, the Goddess, and the Disguises of the Pandavas and Draupadi," *History of Religions* 20 (1980), 147-74, where the androgynized Arjuna actually identifies himself with the royalty of the impure "Brahman" Yudhisthira. See nn. 87 and 109.

68. Deppert, 80, 153-5; see Heesterman IC, 126 (Vratya); Biardeau, EMH V, 148-60 (Arjuna); see nn. 24, 49, and 56. For Arjuna's "suicidal Brahmanicide," see Hiltebeitel, "Two Krsnas," 24; see n. 129.

69. See Eggeling, *Satapatha Brahmana*,vol. 5, xviii-xxiv; and Dumézil, ME I (see n. 56), 192, 213-20, 250, for Asvatthaman. See Hiltebeitel's contribution to this volume for a telling example of the retention of sacrificial notations even in the magical transgression of a deviant "Muslim" figure Muttal Ravattan.

70. O'Flaherty, *Origins of Evil*,160-1. Niels Gutschow informs me that the only (ritual) clowns known to him in Bhaktapur are the manhandled Mupatras, apparently Newar for Mahapatras (=Mahabrahmanas), who are normally farmers hired to play the scapegoat role.

71. J. Parry, "Ghosts, Greed and Sin: The Occupational Identity of the Benares Funeral Priests," *Man* (N.S.) 15 (1980), 88-111. For the Vidusaka being pampered with gifts, see Bhat, *Vidusaka*,59-61; food and modakas even soaked in wine, 67-73; parody of Brahman, 223 and *passim*.For the theoretical inclusion

of the Dom, who is otherwise excluded from the empirical category of Mahabrahmana, see Veena Das, *Structure and Cognition*: *Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual*,2nd ed. (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 148-9.

72. Parry, "Ghosts," 91-6: "The Funeral Priests as 'ghosts'." Carayana, the Vidusaka in the *Viddhasalabhañjika*,actually dons the (leftover) clothes and ornaments of the king himself; see Bhat, *Vidusaka* (see n. 46), 265. Cf. Eck, *Banaras* (see n. 7) 24, 193, 325, 344; and n. 23 *supra*.For diksa as "mystical death," see Thite, "Significances of *Diksa*,"170-1; for embryonic death, see Heesterman, "Vratya," 30-1, n. 86; for Kusle, see Unbescheid, *Kanphata*,139-41.

73. See Coccari in this volume, and idem, "The Bir Babas: An Analysis of a Folk-Deity in North Indian Hinduism," Ph.D. Diss. Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison, 1986; also Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari* (see n. 2), for the Tuluva Brahmeru-Bhuta (p. 165) and other Brahms (180-2) like the Jaina Brahmadeva and the Naga-Brahma (see esp. p. 182, n. 4). Although there is no Brahma corresponding to the kapparai in the cult of Ankalamman, the Mahabrahmana Vinayaka plays a greedy role at the cremation ground in the Brahmanicide myth (36-7) and in the ritual. The Vidusaka in the *Adbhutadarpana* is a marrow, fat, and meat-devouring Brahmaraksasa called, like Ganesa, Mahodara.

74. Heesterman, "Vratya," 10, 30; Thite, "*Diksa*,"171; Otto, *Dionysos*,121-4.

75. *Kapalikas*,p. 79, n. 29. The *Mahabharata* myth not only serves as the missing link between the earlier and later forms

of the Brahmanicide penance, between Sarasvati and Ganga, but also reveals the executioner and victim to be only the two poles of the single Mahabrahmana.

76. Dessigane et al., *Légendes Sivaites*,63. Although on the Ganga bank, the inlet is on the opposite side of Manikarnika tank and the incoming water tastes differently from Ganga water, as I was able to confirm myself during Manikarnika-Devi's festival on 12-13th May, 1986, for which the tank was emptied for cleaning.

77. See Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,30; Eck, *Banaras*,112-20; Sukul, *Varanasi-Vaibhav*,50. J. Irwin, "The Sacred Anthill and the Cult of the Primordial Mound," *History of Religions* 21 (1982), 339-60. It is possible to identify the primordial mound not only with the bisexual embryo but also with the world-egg (*brahmanda*)as the ovum before its fixation on the uterine wall; see F. B. J. Kuiper, "Cosmogony and Conception: A Query," *Ancient Indian Cosmogony* [henceforth AIC], ed. J. Irwin (Delhi: Vikas, 1983), 90-137. Omkara also embodies the unstructured (*anirukta*)ritual speech imitated by the diksita's stammering.

78. Eck, *Banaras*,238-51; J. Parry, "Death and Cosmogony in Kashi," *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, *15* (1981), 337-9, 351, 357. For Visnu's foot, which invariably recurs at Hari-ki-Pauri (Haridwar) and other tirthas on the Ganga, see Kuiper, AIC, 41-55: "The Three Strides of Visnu."

79. Parry, "Ghosts," 94; see n. 71. Also idem, "Death and Digestion: the symbolism of food and eating in north Indian mortuary rites," *Man* (NS), 20 (1985), 612-30, for the pinda as fusion of male and female reproductive sub-

stances (*kundagolaka*),etc.

80. See Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*: *The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (1958; rpt. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965); also his *Myths*, *Dreams and Mysteries*: *The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality* (1960; rpt. Glasgow: Collins, 1968), esp. chaps. 7-8. For the embryonic significance of the Harappan urns, see D. D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1982), 67-81.

81. Heesterman, IC (see n. 49), *54-5*,218 n. 61; David D. Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*: *Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), 110-131, 243-67. For the wilderness as the "womb of kingship" see Heesterman, IC, 6, 118, 126, 142, 144, and 233, n. 61.

82. Sukul, *Varanasi-Vaibhav*, *55*;Eck, *Banaras*,29-31, 182-8; Parry, "Death and Cosmogony," 341; E. Visuvalingam, "Kotwal," 247-9 (see nn. 7 and 78).

83. Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari* (see n. 2), 191 (Gangamma); 82, 139, 189, 196 (Irulappan); 185, 196 (Kasi-Vallalarajan); 83, 144 (Kasi-Visvanatha as consort of Ankalamman). This (re-)interpretation of the goddess cult of the cremation ground is based on S. Visuvalingam's review in *Transgressive Sacrality* (see n. 1). For Vaisno-Devi, see S. Visuvalingam on Erndl's contribution in this volume.

84. Otto, *Dionysos*,60, 71-3, 78, 90-2, 108-24, 134-5, 138-44, 152, esp. 189, 200-3; Burkert, *Homo Necans*,125, 213, 232f; Detienne, *Dionysos à Ciel Ouvert*,61-2; see n. 36. For the official and civic character of the Athenian integration of the transgressive Dionysos, see J.-P. Vernant, *Annuaire du Collège de France* (Paris, 1983-84), 476-7.

85. Heesterman, IC, 26-44, 91, 94, 102, 104, etc.

86. G. C. Tripathi, "Navakalevara: The Unique Ceremony of the 'birth' and 'death' of the 'Lord of the World'," in *The Cult of Jagannatha and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*,ed. A. Eschmann, H. Kulke and G. C. Tripathi (Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 260. See Marglin, *Wives*,265, where the oldest Sabara, who transfers it, is expected to die within the year; and da Silva, *Pouvoir* (see n. 103).

87. Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*,37; cf. 165; 192-3, 179-80, for the problematic relation between the "Saiva" king and the "Sakta" Cempatavars. M. L. Reiniche, "Le temple dans la localité: Quatre examples au Tamilnad," *L'Espace du Temple*: *Espaces*, *Itinéraires*, *Médiations*, *Pursartha* 8 (Paris: EHESS, 1985), 107, 110 (Annamalaiyar); 102 (Kumbhakonam); 106 (Lingodbhava at Tiruvannamalai). Brahma himself is the classic figure of the "pregnant male," comparable to the young Greek who had to imitate labor pains, with appropriate cries and gestures, of a pregnant woman

during certain sacrifices dedicated to Dionysos (Otto, *Dionysos*,195). For Dionysos himself was not only the "effeminate stranger" (Euripides) whom Ino was asked to rear as a girl, but was also sometimes called "androgyne" (Otto, p. 185). His cousin-victim Pentheus is travestied in the feminine attire of his Bacchant-devotee before being torn apart and it is the same actor who plays the role of his mother-devourer Agavé (Vernant, *Mythe*

et Tragédie,vol. 2, 251-2, 255-6); cf. Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*,294-316.

88. E. Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's cudgel or Lat Bhairava" (1986), 250-3 (see n. 7). For its relation to the world-tree, the number 7, and tripartition, see M. Eliade, *Shamanism*: *Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*,Bollingen Series LXXVI (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), 259-287, 403-6 (yupa as cosmic tree, Buddha's seven strides).

89. Rolf A. Stein, *L'Annuaire du Collége de France* (Paris), 1971-72, 499-510; 1972-73, 463-70; 1973-74, 508-17; 1974-75, 488-95; 1975-76, 531-6; 1976-77, 607-15. According to him (1974-75, 490), the primitive form, alone retained in Sino-Japanese tantrism, of Bhairava's khatvanga, "seems to have been a club formed of a skull fitted onto a long bone. It resembles the *yamadanda*,Yama's staff." I thank Prof. Stein for his offprints.

90. Vernant, MT II, 251-54; Detienne, *Dionysos à Ciel Ouvert*,42; cf. Burkert, *Homo Necans*,177, 198 n. 14.

91. Biardeau, *Dictionnaire*,89-90, 109-13; Stein, *Annuaires*,1972-73, 469; 1974-75, 491; see nn. 33 and 89. Also S. Visuvalingam's section B. in this volume. Nevertheless, Hiltebeitel's paper in this volume suggests that anthropomorphized posts like Pottu Raju, and even the Muslim Muttal Ravuttan, still conserve not only the symbolic values but also the bloody function of the Vedic yupa.

92. Stein, *Annuaires*,1971-2, 504-7; 1972-3, 470; 1974-5, 489; Briggs, *Gorakhnath*,308; Anderson, *Festivals*,41-6; Vézies, *Fêtes*,23-4; Gutschow, *Stadtraum*,81-96. Details of the funerary procession were supplied by courtesy of Niels Gutschow, who made a special study of it on 13th April 1987, after our personal discussion of death symbolism in the Newar New Year festivals.

93. Author's translation of Toffin, *Les Néwars*,512; cf. 516, 250.

94. References to Nepal, *Néwars*,359-69; Anderson, *Festivals*,127-37; Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*,268-9; and Gutschow, *Stadtraum*,138-46, 58-63, are completed below by my own fieldwork at Kathmandu from 25th Sept. (beginning of Indra Jatra), until 28th Oct. 85, facilitated by a grant from the C.N.R.S. "équipes de recherche" 299 and 249. For its derivation from the New Year festival of Vedic cosmogony, the role of Asura-Varuna, and the later role of the *jarjara* (=dhvaja) in the preliminaries of the Sanskrit drama, see Kuiper, VV, *supra* n. 53. According to the *Brhat Samhita*,the pole should preferably be from an Arjuna tree, and another staff should also be raised as Indra's mother. Another Grhya Sutra prescribes the Indrayajña with oblations to Indrani, Aja Ekapada, Ahirbudhnya, etc. to be performed on the full moon day itself of Bhadrapada (see Ekapada-Bhairava, n. 106 below). Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*,II, 824-6, derives from the Indramaha the annual raising of a bamboo staff in the Deccan and other places on the first day of Caitra, which corresponds to the Bhaktapur Bisket Jatra where the pole is identified with Bhairava (= Kasi-Visvanath) instead.

95. See Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths* (see n. 81), 138-92, 223-43; and esp.

S. Visuvalingam's review article "Are *Tamil Temple Myths* really Tamil?" presented to the VIth World Tamil Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 15-19th November 1987. See Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* IV, 530-2 for Mahalayasraddha.

96. Anderson, *Festivals*,156-63; Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*,47-8, 235, 238-9; Gutschow, *Stadtraum*,135-8. I was unable to study the exchange of swords in October 1987, as the grants to study the festival season were released only in 1988. With the rapid erosion of traditional structures there is no guarantee that the ritual will still wait to be studied after twelve years.

97. E. Visuvalingam, "Kotwal," 252. For the equation of the fallen Indrapole with the victimized diksita, see S. Visuvalingam's treatment of the Brahman Carudatta condemned as an Untouchable to be executed by Candalas as an offering to the goddess at the stake in Act 10 of the *Mrcchakatika* in *Transgressive Sacrality* (see n. 1).

98. Sukul, *Varanasi*,205-6 (on Kapali-Bhairava), 103-5, 247-8; *Krtyakalpataru* 54 and *Kasikhanda* 33.114-5 cited by Sukul on 260-1; 105, 121. Sukul (p. 121) had suggested a separate Kula Stambha supposedly erected by Asoka only because he recognized the wholly Hindu character of the Mahasmasana Stambha.

99. Stein *Annuaires* (see n. 89), 1971-72, 504; 1972-73, 464-5; 1973-74, 50911; 1975-76, 535-6; 1976-77, 609. For *Rudrapisaca*,see Eck, *Banaras*,339; Sukul, 37-8; see n. 7. For *Brahmanala*,see Sukul, 51-2; Parry, "Death and Cosmogony," 343 and n. 8; see n. 28. Researchers into *Near Death Experiences* (NDE), especially those who have undergone it themselves, should not have much difficulty, despite the Indian cultural context, in recognizing the inner coherence of this mythico-ritual universe.

100. Sukul, 71-2, 119, 121 (citing *Kasikhanda* 100.99), 150-2, 250, 347-8; E. Visuvalingam, "Kotwal," 252, 255.

101. Anderson, *Festivals*,43; see n. 5. Mary Searle Chatterjee kindly shared with us her summary of the two versions, now included in her as yet unpublished paper on "Religious Division and the Mythology of the Past." Chatterjee added that she had seen a painting for sale in Britain of human sacrifice being offered at a "Somnath temple" (label) in Benares. Ghazi Miya's annual wedding with Zohra Bibi, celebrated on the first Sunday of Jyestha (May-June) by the Muslims of Adampura, also appears to have been an unconsummated tragic union. For the victim as bridegroom, see esp. S. Visuvalingam on *Mrcchakatika* Act X; see n. 97.

102. Sontheimer, *Biroba*,29-30, 200-2, 252 (Mhaskoba); 46, 48, 184, 196 (Biroba), 61-3, 240-1 (two wives). See also his "Some Incidents in the History of the God Khandoba," *Asie du Sud*: *Traditions et Changements*,Proceedings of the VIth European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, 8-13 July 1978 (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1978); "The Mallari/Khandoba Myth as Reflected in Folk Art and Ritual," *Anthropos* 79 (1984), 155-170. See also Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*,267-94 for Vedic antecedents.

103. Sontheimer 1976, 29, 31, 95-97, 243; R. N. Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), 114ff. on "The Beginnings of Tantric Cults," esp. 121-2: "Stambhesvari"; cf. Eschmann, "Hinduization of Tribal Deities in Orissa: The Sakta and Saiva Typology," in Eschmann et al. ed., *The Cult of Jagannatha*,79-97; Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*,37; and Nepali, *The Newars*,298-305, for the "aboriginal origin" of the Nepali Bhairavas. For a cogent critique of such genetic approaches seeking to explain Hindu divinities like Jagannatha or Bhairava (purely) in terms of their evolution from non-Brahmanical, even pre-Aryan, substratums, see J. C. Gomes da Silva, *Pouvoir et Hierarchie* (Bruxelles: Unversité Libre de Bruxelles, in press).

104. Sontheimer, *Biroba*,29, 31, 95-7, 243 (Gosavi); 176-9, 284.

105. Marglin, *Wives*,273; 243-7: daitas' consanguinity with the king; their representing Jagannatha, 256, 261, 276-9; king as sweeper: 241, 254, 258; obscenities and dissolution of caste boundaries including the Brahman/daita opposition during the car festival, 275; Pati Mahapatra: 250-1, 264-75; Ganesa: 249, 271.

106. H. von Stietencron, "The Saiva Component in the Early Evolution of Jagannatha," 119-23; and A. Eschmann, H. Kulke, G. C. Tripathi, "The Formation of the Jagannatha Triad," 174-5, 189, both in Eschmann et al., *Cult of Jagannatha* (see n. 86); also 104-5.

107. C. Malamoud, "Village et forêt dans l'idéologie de l'Inde brahmanique," in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*,XVII (1976), 3-20, esp. p. 10, n. 36.

108. Tripathi, "Navakalevara," 236-8. There is also the inexplicable procedure of drawing the inverted figure of a man on the tree followed by the sacrifice of an "animal" in the form of a white gourd, before the Jagannatha-tree is actually cut down (247-9). Interestingly, the lama explains the inverted khatvanga suspended just over the kapala recipient of the alchemical fireplace by the practice, unattested in the texts, of the adept being (mystically) decapitated while upside-down (Stein, *Annuaire*,1976, 534-6). See nn. 86 and 89. But compare S. Visuvalingam's treatment of the motif of the

inverted tree in the Kattavarayan narrative in this volume.

109. See Biardeau, "L'arbre *sami* et le buffle sacrificiel," *Autour de la déesse Hindoue*,215-43. For the maternity of the androgynized diksita, see nn. 67 and 87.

110. Sontheimer, *Biroba*,249, 252, 183-6, 204f.; Marglin, *Wives*,327 n. 1, 264 (for Jagannatha as Kali); see nn. 6 and 13. The stone pillars representing the goddesses Pitabali and Khambhesvari, along the Orissan trunk road, are dubbed lingas, and the rock-goddess is encircled by a "*sakti*"to become a svayambhu linga as at the Bhairava-temple at Puranacuttack; Eschmann, *Cult of Jagannatha*,95-6 (see n. 86).

111. For a similar explanation of the supposedly "foreign" origin of the Greek Dionysos in terms of his transgressive otherness institutionalized through the controlled trance, the officialized thiase, the festive *komos*,the theatre, etc. at

the very heart of Greek civilization, see Vernant, in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, MT II, 246, 251, 255, 257, 259, 269; the transgressive dimension is underlined especially at p. 105 by V.-Naquet, and by Detienne, *Dionysos mis à Mort*,7-8 (see nn. 38 and 36).

112. Author's trans. of Biardeau, *L'Hindouisme*,162, cf. 164; cf. Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism*,17, 32, 36-7; see nn. 12 and 22.

113. Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*,49; see n. 3. For the Kaula "deradicalization" of Kapalika ideology, and the role of the esoteric Krama school, see Alexis Sanderson, "Purity and power among the Brahmans of Kashmir," in *The Category of the Person*: *Anthropology*, *Philosophy*, *History*,M. Carrithers, S. Collins and S. Lukes, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 190-216; "Mandala and Agamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir," in *Mantras et Diagrammes Rituels dans l'Hindouisme* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1986), 169-214.

114. Abhinavagupta, *Tantraloka*,Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies no. LVII (Bombay: 1936), vol. 11, chap. 29.10 (transgression); 11-13 (wine); 83-9 (comm.), 142-9 (mantric power due to neutralization of opposing vital airs in the median channel); 96ff. (*dutiyaga*);97-8 (transgressive definition of *brahmacarin*);101-3 (transgression of caste, incest); 104-15 (sexualization of consciousness); 115-28 (yamala *santodita* state); 128-9 (kundagolaka); 129-142 (*viryaviksobha*);156-61 (*bhairavastakapadam*);162-3 (yoginibhu); 181-5 (internalized cremation through the all-devouring Kala-Fire of the universal dissolution); 138-9 (*pisacavesa*,demoniac possession when a higher state of consciousness is blocked at a lower level instead of vice-versa). This description of the Kulayaga has been "conflated" with the practices of the Puri *rajagurus* (Marglin, *Wives*,217-42; see n. 13), and from my manuscript of the *Unmattakhyakramapaddhati*,analyzed in my Ph.D. Diss. (Paris, 1981). See also K. C. Pandey, *Abhinavagupta*: *An Historical and Philosophical Study*,2nd ed. (Varanasi: Chowkhamba, 1963), 607-23; and Abhinavagupta, *Paratrimsikavivarana*,KS no. XVIII (Bombay: 1918), 45-51. The yamala state can be usefully compared to the sexually differentiated roles of Mitra and Varuna when this dual divinity mythically unites with the divinized courtesan Urvasi in the Puranas.

115. Parry, "Sacrificial Death," 81; Marglin, *Wives*,224-5, 237; 224, 239-40 (kulamrta); 218, 233-4 (cremation ground).

116. Eliade, *Shamanism*,411, 414; see also 421-7 for "Shamanism among the Aboriginal Tribes of India," particularly the Savaras. For Lévi-Strauss, see nn. 27, 24, and 44. See Heesterman, IC, 35, for the pure/impure alternation in the sacrifice; see n. 49.

117. Kuiper, VV, 35-7, 75-6, 102-6, 166-8, 193; AIC, 48-9; see nn. *53* and 77. For some of the fundamental issues involved in this problematic transformation, see Biardeau's review of VV in *Indo-Iranian Journal* (1981), 293-300.

118. W. E. Hale, *Asura in Early Vedic Religion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), who is, however, unable to explain *Rgveda* X.124 from his purely evolutionistic perspective (86-92), whereas Kuiper, VV, 13-42, has provided a coherent

interpretation of this "transfer of sovereignty" to Indra in terms of his mythical dialectic. It would be sound methodological procedure to provisionally separate the significance of Varuna from the evolution of the Asuras before reintegrating the Asura Varuna of the Rgveda; contrast Kuiper, VV, 5-13.

119. Deppert, *Rudra's Geburt* (see n. 24), 85-6,134-44 (sacral kingship of the preAryan Middle-Eastern type), 233-5. Cf. Kuiper, VV, 24-6 for Varuna's ksatra.

120. See G. Dumézil, *Les dieux souverains des Indo-Europeens*,2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), *55-85*,and especially his *Mitra-Varuna*,2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1948); Kuiper, AIC, 9-22; VV, 45-6, 59-60 (see nn. 77 and 53). Dumézil's and Kuiper's positions had remained irreconcilable because the former had come to perceive Mitra-Varuna primarily in sociologizing terms as the priestly summit of the trifunctional hierarchy whereas the latter continued to relegate Mitra to the under-world simply because he shares the Asurahood of his twin Varuna, despite the recognized difficulties of Mitra's partiality for the upperworld and the mythic interferences with Indra; cf. Kuiper, "Remarks on the Avestan Hymn to Mithra," *Indo-Iranian Journal* (1961-2), 36-60; esp. 46-53, 57-9; "Some Observations on Dumézil's Theory," *Numen*,8 (1961), 34-45. A transgressively dialectical approach would equate Varuna, as the under-worldly pole of Dumézil's Mitraic first function, with the demoniac tribal Bhairava intruding from the embryogonic chaos beyond the Vedic universe; cf. Gomes da Silva's paper on "Hierarchy and Transgression" (see n. 1). Along with S. Visuvalingam, I thank Prof. Kuiper and the late Prof. Dumézil for having so much sympathetically encouraged our efforts to synthesize their respective insights into the basic structures of Vedic religion.

121. Heesterman, IC, 95f., 228 n. 1. For the socio-economic transformations and the technological innovations that determined the emergence and conditioned the growth of early Buddhism from its Magadhan cradle, see D. D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (Delhi: Vikas, 1970), where the rise to prominence of the merchant classes and the expansion of commercial circuits should be especially emphasized.

122. This necessarily modifies L. Dumont's thesis of the total secularization of kingship in Hindu India; cf. Biardeau, *supra* nn. 33, 64 and 68; and esp. Hiltebeitel, "Towards a Coherent Study of Hinduism," *Religious Studies Review*,9 (1983), 206-11.

123. For the identification of the royal kiritin Arjuna with the avatara-Krsna in the rsi-couple Nara/Narayana, see Biardeau, EMH V, 89-94, 177; for Arjuna's Rudraic dimension, neglected by her, see Hiltebeitel, "Siva," 151-60; see nn. 56 and 67. Born from the anger of Krsna-Narayana, it is Rudra himself who precedes Arjuna into the battlefield and is really responsible for the carnage; see J. Scheuer, *Siva dans le Mahabharata*,Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Science Réligieuses, vol. LXXXIV (Paris: PUF, 1982), 279-91; also 222, 228, 241-2 and *passim*.

124. Dharma forms a bi-unity with Arjuna no less than Krsna does, which

also explains the peculiar joking relationship between Krsna and Yudhithira, such as when they flatter each other with the credit for Bhisma's fall. Kuiper, "Some Observations," 42-4, rightly deduced that Yudhisthira as the incarnation of Dharma (= *rta*)must represent Mitra-Varuna, but had difficulty reconciling the underworldly Varuna with the passive sacral purity of the upperworldly Pandava. Biardeau, "Contributions à l'étude du mythe-cadre du *Mahabharata*," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient*, *55* (1969), 97-105, seeks to reconcile Dumézil's Mitra and Kuiper's Varuna within a totalizing Hindu perspective by seeing in Dharma the prolongation, profoundly transformed by the renunciation ideal, of the socio-cosmic order of the Vedic rta. Cf. *supra* nn. 65 and 67. Nevertheless, Kuiper had already suggested the typological equation of the Sudra-Vidura with the epic Varuna and ambivalent purohita-figures like Usana Kavya, and Visvarupa (VV, 93-101), which would imply that Yudhisthira himself is a (royal) Mahabrahmana.

125. Heesterman IC, 27, 92; cf. 4, 43-4, 155, 200, 232, n. 32, 154, 208, n. 12; see esp. n. 51 *supra*.

126. See Kuiper, VV, 67-74: "Varuna as a Demoniacal Figure and as the God of Death," for his links with his successor Yama-Dharmaraja associated with the Fathers (pitr); 60-6: for the close association with Death and the Fathers of the virupa-Angirasas, who are later the repository of the magical practices of the *Atharvaveda*.Instead of seeing in the dog Dharma that accompanies Yudhisthira to heaven the transgressive dimension of the Brahmanized Dharmaraja, Biardeau's Hindu bhakti is obliged to purify Yama's dog, and all the other impure symbols invested in "The Royalty of Yudhisthira,"

of the pollution of Death; EMH V, 109-10. See *Manu* X.51-6; cf. Deppert, *Rudra's Geburt*,59-62 (on Candala); D. White's paper on "Dogs, Dice and Death," delivered at the Transgressive Sacrality conference (see nn. 24 and 1); and Sontheimer in this volume.

127. Cf. Gomes da Silva, *Pouvoir et Hierarchie*;I thank the author for sending the typescript of his Lévi-Straussian critique of (the prolongations of) Durkheimian sociologism (in Louis Dumont's anthropology of Indian civilization). For Ramanuja, see Lorenzen, *Kapalikas*, *6*.

128. See Biardeau, *Le Sacrifice*,99, n. 2, 25 n. 1; Shulman, *The King and the Clown*,247-8.

129. See A. Hiltebeitel, "The Two Krsnas in One Chariot: Upanisadic Imagery and Epic Mythology," *History of Religions* 24 (1984), 1-26, where he points out that on occasion Arjuna/Krsna are compared to Indra/Varuna or Siva/Brahma on the single chariot of Brahman. They are again identified as the doubled Krsna while helping Agni in the sexualized sacrifice of consuming the Khandava forest. See Heesterman, IC, 151, for the early function of the purohita as charioteer for the king and Krsna's role in this context; 79, 151 (king as Brahman); 37-8, 42 for the polluting king/purohita relation (esp. contrast p. 155).

130. See M.-C. Porcher, "La Princesse et le Royaume: sur la representation

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de la royauté dans le *Dasakumaracarita* de Dandin," *Journal Asiatique*,273 (1985), 183-206. Like the northern *dombika* (dance), the southern *ula* could also be seen as an expression of this universalizing dialectic rather than as a sexual contradiction, as in Shulman, *King and Clown*,312-24. The brahmacarya of the "chaste" Hanuman in the *Ramayana* is interpreted in folk variants rather as an exaggerated virility matching that of Vrsakapi.

131. O'Flaherty, *Asceticism* (see n. 2), 104-11, 146-64; see n. 66. For the deconstruction of (Tamil) bhakti through the dialectic of transgressive sacrality, see S. Visuvalingam's section D. in this volume.

132. See G. Toffin, "Les Aspects Religieux de la Royauté au Népal," *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 48/1 (1979), 53-82; "Dieux souverains et rois dévots dans l'ancienne royauté de la vallée du Népal," *L'Homme* 26 (1986), 71-95, esp. p. 84, n. 19 raising the problem of Bhairava, and Sontheimer *Biroba*,192, 250. For Brahma's inability to create, see O'Flaherty, *Origins of Evil*,284 (see n. 2). Cf. Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths* (see n. 81), p. 90ff. and especially S. Visuvalingam's section B. in this volume.

133. See S. Visuvalingam's treatment of the contributions of Coccari, Hiltebeitel and Sontheimer in this volume.

134. G. J. Held, *Mahabharata*: *An Ethnological Study* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1953), 182-85. The link with Kala-Bhairava on the one hand and the angry Guru on the other, is perhaps to be found in Siva, who emerges as the furious Mrtyuñjaya/Kalakala from the linga to slay Yama when the latter tries to forcibly claim Markandeya, destined for Death at the (perennial) age of sixteen. All fieldwork in Banaras was carried out with the indispensable help of Om Prakash Sharma. I also thank all the numerous devotees of Bhairava in India and Nepal for allowing me to participate freely in their cult and aiding me to understand it better.

135. Vézies, *Les Fêtes*,72-5. I had the good fortune to witness this festival in April 1985, with a grant accorded by the C.N.R.S. "équipe" 249, and to interview all the participants, above all the dhami himself. For Amsuvarman, see Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*,337.

136. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*,291-2, 237; p. 239, n. 101 for Vajra-Bhairava. During my fieldwork in July 1985 in Ladakh, the lamas often described terrifying figures like Yamantaka in the *gonpas* as "Bhairava," who is already called "destroyer of Yama" (= Yamari) in his Puranic origin-myth.

137. It was Asakaji Vajracarya, the teacher of the Astamatrka dances to the Sakya boys at Patan, who also gave me the details of the eight cremation grounds haunted by the astabhairava of the Valley. According to him, some Vajracaryas still worship Bhairava at these sites in order to obtain various siddhis.

138. *Rgveda* V.62.1: *rtena rtam apihitam dhruvam vam*. . . .See Nepali, *Newars*,300; Slusser, *Nepal Mandala*,237. See S. Visuvalingam's treatment of judicial terror in "Psychoanalysis, Criminal Law and Sacrificial *Dharma*,"in *Transgressive*

Sacrality;see n. 1.

7
New Data on the Kapalikas

David N. Lorenzen

The early Indian "ascetics" known as the Kapalikas can be regarded as archetypal in at least two senses. In the first place, to their opponents, whose writings until very recently have been our principal source of information on Kapalika beliefs and practices, the Kapalikas represent the archetype, or stereotype, of an immoral and heretical ascetic. In Sanskrit literature, Kapalika characters mock Vedic doctrines while they either prepare a human sacrifice or drink and carouse with comely female disciples. In the second place, however, some of these sources suggest that the Kapalikas in fact ritually modeled their lives on a divine archetype, on the god Siva-Kapalin who must endure a lengthy penance to atone for the sin of having cut off one of the five heads of Brahma. This symbolic reenactment of Siva's Great Vow (*mahavrata*)earns the Kapalikas their title of Mahavratins.

This doubly archetypal character of the Kapalikas, or at least of their literary portraits in the writings of their opponents, has made them apt objects of scholarly analysis from a variety of structuralist, symbolicist, and archetypicist points of view. Examples can be found in my *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*,in Wendy O'Flaherty's discussion of the Siva-Kapalin myth in her *Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*,and in Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam's article in this volume and in her "Bhairava: Kotwal of Varanasi." 1

The most exciting recent discovery relevant to the Kapalikas is Alexis Sanderson's identification of a corpus of unpublished Saivite tantric texts which describe Kapalika worship and observances. The most important of these texts is the *Jayadrathayamala*,manuscripts of which are preserved in the national archives of Nepal and have been photographed by the Nepal-German manuscript preservation project.

Sanderson has yet to publish a full descriptive analysis of this material, but some preliminary discussion of it is available in his recently and soon to be published writings. 2

Most so-far published source material relevant to the Kapalikas found in Indian literature and epigraphy has been discussed in my *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*.The most important literary omission is the story of Ciruttonda contained in the Tamil *Periya Puranam*,a text of the twelfth century.3 This legend relates how a Bhairava ascetic came to the house of the devotee Ciruttonda and demanded to be fed the flesh of Ciruttonda's son. The father dutifully killed his son and had his wife cook the flesh. When the meal was served the ascetic revealed himself to be the god Siva and returned the son to life. Although the text does not specifically call the ascetic a Kapalika, his character is obviously congruent with the Kapalika archetype.

Another important, although brief, previously unnoticed reference to the Kapalikas is found in the well-known Nath-sampradaya text, Svatmarama's *Hatha-yoga-pradipika*.4 Svatmarama claims to describe the Amaroli mudra "according to the *khanda* doctrine of the Kapalikas." The Amaroli mudra is a variant of the better known Vajroli mudra, a sexual yogic exercise in which the adepts reabsorb the fluid released during intercourse.

A few other previously unnoticed references to the Kapalikas in published Sanskrit sources have been identified and discussed by Minoru Hara and A. C. Barthakuria.5 Unfortunately, none of them adds much of significance to our understanding of Kapalika beliefs and practices.

Recently Nagendra Nath Upadhyay of Banaras Hindu University has published a monograph in Hindi on *Bauddha Kapalik sadhana aur sahitya* in which he discusses the beliefs and practices of what he claims to be a tradition of

Buddhist Kapalikas.6 He has in fact produced a useful study of Buddhist tantricism, some early schools of which do seem to have been strongly influenced by the Kapalikas. It seems clear, however, that the original Kapalikas were Saivites and not Buddhists. Apart from Krsnacaryapada's well-known and probably metaphorical references to himself as a Kapalin in his *caryapadas*,7references which in any case come from a tradition as much associated with the Naths as with the Buddhists, Upadhyay has not offered, in my opinion, sufficient evidence to justify specifically calling the tantric Buddhists of his study Kapalikas. On the other hand, Alexis Sanderson, who has been working with unpublished manuscripts of the Buddhist *yoginitantra* tradition,

claims that this tradition should be considered to be "a variant of the Saiva Kapalika." 8

Until Sanderson's identification of the corpus of Kapalika texts preserved in Nepal, I held a small but lingering doubt about whether an organized Kapalika sect in fact ever existed. It is now clear that this skepticism was largely unjustified. Nonetheless, even this Kapalika literature will not be sufficient to adequately locate the Kapalika sect in historical time and space. For this, epigraphical evidence is absolutely essential. Unfortunately, very little such evidence has so far come to light. Up until now only two inscriptions have been identified which clearly record donations to persons who are likely to have been Kapalika ascetics.9 Both are from western India. A copper plate grant found in Igatpuri, Nasik District, registers a donation of a village to finance the "Guggula-puja" at a temple of the god Kapalesvara. The donees were the Mahavratin ascetics who lived at the temple. The donor was the early Calukya king Nagavardhana who lived about the middle of the seventh century A.D. A second copper plate grant, found near Tilakwada in Baroda District, registers a grant made in A.D. 1047 to "the muni named Dinakara, a Mahavratadhara who was like the Kapalin, Samkara, in bodily form." The donor was a vassal or official of the Paramara king Bhoja.

In recent years two other epigraphs have been edited and published which can be identified as grants from and to Kapalika ascetics, although the editors of the inscriptions have not made this identification. The more important inscription was found at Kolanupaka, ancient Kollipake, in Nalgonda District of Andhra Pradesh.10 It is written in highly Sanskritized Kannada prose and is dated in Saka year 973 (A.D. 1050) during the reign of the Calukya (of Kalyana) king Trailokyamalla (Somesvara I). It records the donation of some land to Candamayya, a servant of Gangamaraja, by a Brahman (*vipra*)named Somi-bhattaraka. This Somi-bhattaraka is said to be the chief (*sthanadhipati*)of the temple of Samkaresvara (= Siva) in Kollipake.

The inscription gives us the first word portrait of a Kapalika ascetic from a source sympathetic to these ascetics. After a few words whose joint sense is not totally clear, the inscription refers to Somibhattaraka as "devoted to the meaning of the Somasiddhanta issued from the lotus mouth (? of Siva)." He is said to be "sprinkled with ashes; adorned with the six insignia (mudra); and holding a khatvanga club, a skull (kapala), *damaruga* and *mrdanga* drums, and a *kahala* (?= trumpet)." Next he is called a "bee (buzzing round) the lotus feet of

the glorious (god) Srinatha." Finally he is said to be a "Mahavratin, an ocean of generosity and a treasury of truth and asceticism." 11

The most interesting aspects of this description of Somi-bhattaraka are the mention of his devotion to the doctrine of Somasiddhanta and the mention of the six insignia, the khatvanga club and the skull. Somasiddhanta can be better discussed after reviewing the contents of the second new Kapalika inscription. The mention of the six insignia, the skull, and the khatvanga club provides an important and surprising confirmation of the statements about the Kapalikas made by Yamunacarya and his disciple Ramanuja, both contemporaries of Somibhattaraka. In his *Agamapramanya* Yamunacarya claims that the Kapalikas assert that:12

> The fruit of liberation (*apavarga*)is attained through knowledge of the six insignia (*mudrika-satka*)and through wearing them, not through the understanding of *brahman*.He who knows the essence of the six insignia, who is proficient in the highest mudra, and who meditates on the Self as seated in the vulva (*bhagasana-stha*)attains nirvana. (The Kapalikas) define the six insignia as the *karnika* (earring), the *rucaka* (necklace), the *kundala* (earring), the *sikhamani* (crest-jewel), ashes (*bhasma*),and the sacred thread (yajñopavita). The skull (kapala) and

> the khatvanga are declared to be the secondary insignia (*upamudra*).If the body is marked with these (various insignia) one is not born again here (on earth).

In Somi-bhattaraka's inscription the reading of the term *six insignia* (*sanmudra*)is not completely clear, but a comparison with Yamunacarya's text confirms the reading, particularly since the skull and khatvanga in both appear immediately afterwards. The damaru and other drums and musical instruments are frequently associated with Saivite ascetics, but do not seem to have been special insignia of the Kapalikas. Ashes are, of course, worn by nearly all Saivite ascetics.

A detailed discussion of the six insignia and the two secondary insignia is found in my *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas* and need not be repeated here. The significance of the *Mahavratin*,which the inscription applies to Somi-bhattaraka, is likewise discussed at length in the same monograph.13 I would only note here that I do not agree with Minoru Hara's suggestion that "the adjective *mahat* in the *maha-vrata* may have had a pejorative connotation" as in the case of the term Maha-brahmana.14 It is clear from this inscription and from many other sources that the Kapalikas themselves called themselves Mahavratins. It is unlikely that they would have done so if the term was pejorative.

In the second new inscription, it is the donee who appears to belong to the Kapalikas, although the identification is considerably more problematic in this case. The inscription was found in Bangalore District. 15 It is written in Sanskrit and Kannada and has been dated in about the sixth century A.D. The donor was the "Prthivi-Komkanimahadhiraja" named Durvinita. In his fourth regnal year Durvinita gave the village of Penna-ur as a *brahmadeya* to "Kapalisarman, who belonged to the Kutsagotra, the Taittiriyacarana, and the Pravacanakalpa; who was a resident of Upakotta; whose rites were characterized by sacrifices with Soma; and who was the son of Agnisarman."16

The name Kapali-sarman makes it fairly likely that the donee was a Kapalika. We have noted that Somi-bhattaraka was called a vipra, *i.e*.,a Brahman. Kapali-sarma is not merely a Brahman, he is a learned Brahman evidently well-versed in Vedic literature and rituals. His association with Soma sacrifices is particularly noteworthy since it suggests some relation between such sacrifices and the Somasiddhanta of Somi-bhattaraka.

What was this doctrine called Somasiddhanta?17 In the lists of four (or more) Saivite sects frequently found in Sanskrit sources the term *Soma*, *Sauma* or *Saumya* sometimes appears in place of Kapalika. Ksirasvamin's commentary on the *Amarakosa* equates Kapalins, Mahavratins, Somasiddhantins, and Tantrikas. In Krsnamisra's *Prabodhacandrodaya* and Anandaraya's *Vidyaparinayana* the Kapalika characters are both called *Somasiddhanta*.Several commentaries on Krsnamisra's *Prabodhacandrodaya* derive the term *soma* from *sa-Uma* or *Umaya sahitah*, *i.e*."he who is with Uma" or the god Siva as the lover of Uma-Parvati. This folk etymology obviously agrees well with the sexual symbolism characteristic of tantric Hinduism, but Kapali-sarman's association with Soma sacrifices or rites suggests the possibility of a more orthodox, Vedic background to the term. Vinodacandra Srivastav has criticized me for identifying Somasiddhanta as the doctrine of the Kapalikas alone, suggesting that *Somasiddhanta* and *Nyayasiddhanta* may have been equivalent terms.18 This equation would make it possible to connect the philosophical affiliation of the Kapalikas with that of the Kalamukhas, who are known to have been mostly Naiyayikas, but the evidence which Srivastav cites to support his hypothesis is clearly insufficient. In virtually all cases the term *Somasiddhanta* refers to the doctrine of the Kapalikas or, in one or two references, other tantric ascetics. Until further evidence is discovered, there is little reason to connect Somasiddhanta with Nyaya or any other known philosophical school.

The image of the Kapalika ascetic in Indian literature is an interesting and valid topic of study independent of its possible correspondence or non-correspondence with historical reality. Nonetheless, the attempt to reconstruct this historical reality is obviously an endeavor of equal or greater interest. The recent identification of a corpus of Kapalika texts preserved in Nepal promises to revolutionize our understanding of actual Kapalika beliefs and practices. A better understanding of the historical evolution, distribution, and strength of the Kapalikas also requires the identification and analysis of whatever epigraphical material exists relevant to these ascetics. The inscriptions of Somibhattaraka and Kapali-sarman add important historical data to what is already known about the Kapalikas.

Notes

1. D. Lorenzen, *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); W. O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); E.-C. Visuvalingam, "Bhairav: Kotwal of Varanasi," in V. P. Verma (ed.), *Varanasi Through the Ages* (Varanasi: Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti, 1986), 241-60. See also H. von Stietencron, "Bhairava," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*,Supplementa I, Teil 3 (1969), 863-71; S. Kramrisch, *The Presence of Siva* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); S. Gupta, D. J. Hoens, and T. Goudriaan, *Hindu Tantrism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979); and J. Parry, "Sacrificial death and the necrophagous ascetic," in M. Bloch and J. Parry (eds.), *Death and the Regeneration of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 74-110.

2. Alexis Sanderson, "Purity and Power among the Brahmans of Kashmir," in M. Carrithers *et al*.(eds.), *The Category of the Person* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 190-216; "Mandala and Agamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir," in *Mantras et diagrammes rituels dans l'hindouisme* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Récherche Scientifique, 1986), 169-207; review of two *agama* texts edited by N. R. Bhatt in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*,48 (1985), 564-68; entries on "Krama Saivism," "Saivism in Kashmir," and "Trika Saivism," in M. Eliade, ed.-in-chief, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), vol. 13, 14-17; and "Saivism and the Tantric Traditions," in Stuart Sutherland (ed.), *The World's Religions* (London: Coom Helm Press, forthcoming). Sanderson kindly supplied me with this information and copies of most of the material. Two other probable Kapalika manuscripts-Kapalika*matavyastha* and *Somasiddhanta-are* listed in G. Kaviraj's catalogue, *Tantrik sahitya* (Lucknow: Hindi Samiti, 1972).

3. See M. A. Dorai Rangaswamy, *The Religion and Philosophy of Tevaram*,4 vols. in 2 (Madras: University of Madras, 1958-59), 1018; and Yogi Suddhananda

Bharathi, *The Grand Epic of Saivism* (Madras: South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1970), 168-75. See also Hudson in this volume.

4. Svatmarama, *Hathayogapradipika* (Madras: The Adyar Library, 1972), verse 3.96.

5. M. Hara, Review of *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*,by D. Lorenzen, *IndoIranian Journal*,17 (1975), 253-61; A. C. Barthakuria, *The Kapalikas*: *a Critical Study of the Religion*, *Philosophy and Literature of a Tantric Sect* (Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak, 1984).

6. N. N. Upadhyay, *Bauddha Kapalik sadhana aur sahitya* (Allahabad: Smriti Prakasan, 1983).

7. See Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*,69-71; and P. Kvaerne, *An Anthology of Buddhist Tantric Songs* (2nd ed.; Bankok: White Orchid Press, 1986), 37, 113-22, *150-55*.

8. Letter to me dated 16 January 1987.

9. See Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*,27-28.

10. P. V. Parabrahma Sastry, *Select Epigraphs of Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1965), 7-10.

11. *mukha-kamala-vinirggata-Somasiddhantabhipraya-parayanam [*bha]smoddhulitasa[*nmu]dra[* =dra]lamkrita-khatvamga-kapala-damaruga-mrdamga-kahalam sri-Srinathapada-pamkaja-bhramara-mahavrati-danamburasi-satya-tapo-nidhi-*...The starred additions and correction are my own as is the translation.

12. Yamunacarya, *Agama-pramanya*,ed. J. A. B. van Buitenen (Madras: Ramanuja Research Society, 1971), p. 43, lines 7-16. The translation is mine. Ramanuja repeats the same verses minus the first and last. See Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*,1-4.

13. See Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*,2-7, 73-82.

14. Hara, Review, p. 257, n.

15. K. V. Ramesh, *Inscriptions of the Western Gangas* (Delhi: ICHR and Agam Prakashan, 1984), 70-74 (no. 19).

16. *Kutsagotraya Taittiriyacaranaya Pravacanakalpaya Upakottanivasine Somenestavisistakarmmanah Agnisarmmanahputraya Kapalisarmmane*... .My translation differs from that of Ramesh who renders the phrase *Somenesta-visista-karmmanah* as "whose religious rites were rendered special by his performance of those rites with *soma*."Ramesh notes, however, that an earlier edition of the inscription in the *Mysore Archaeological Reports* reads *somenesti*- rather than *somenesta*-.Even granting that Ramesh's reading is orthographically correct, it makes better sense if the text is amended to the reading given in the earlier edition.

17. See Lorenzen, *Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*,82-83.

18. V. Srivastav, "Kapalik evam Kalamukh: ek aitihasik samiksa," *Journal of The Bihar Puravid Parishad* 3 (1979), 155-78. Srivastav fails to cite the most interesting piece of evidence in favor of his hypothesis. G. Tucci has suggested that the term *na ya xiu mo* found in Chinese translations of Harivarman's lost

Sanskrit work *Tattvasiddhisastra* is equivalent to *Nyayasauma* or *Nyayasaumya*,which may be equivalent to Somasiddhanta. See G. Tucci, "Animadversiones Indicae," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*,n.s. 26 (1930), 125-60 (n.b. pp. 129-30). Srivastav further speculates (p. 174) that Soma may be the name of the human author of the Somasiddhanta. This is a plausible suggestion but is not supported by any concrete evidence.

8
Rapist or Bodyguard, Demon or Devotee? Images of Bhairo in the Mythology and Cult of Vaisno Devi

Kathleen M. Erndl

Vaisno Devi is a popular goddess worshipped in a mountain cave shrine near Katra, District Jammu in northwestern India. She resides there in the form of three pindis (rock outcroppings) representing the Sakta trinity, Mahalaksmi, Mahakali, and Mahasarasvati. Vaisno Devi is said to be the only shrine in India in which all three forms of the goddess are present in svayambhu (self-born) form. She is considered to be the eldest of a group of goddesses, called the "Seven Sisters," who are collectively worshipped as aspects of the pan-Indian Mahadevi (great goddess) who slew the buffalo demon Mahisasura. Hindus worship these goddesses primarily for material considerations such as fertility, wealth, and happiness. They do not see these material desires as contradicting the ultimately saving power of the goddess' grace, for the cult of the goddess is world-affirming and non-dualistic. Neither do they see these desires as contradicting the flavor of bhakti (devotion) which thoroughly permeates the cult. Rather than seeing the goddess' favors as being simply transactional, they see them as her way of showing love to her devotees.

At the shrines of all the Seven Sisters, the question of animal sacrifice is an ambiguous one. Priests and devotees recognize that animal sacrifice is traditional in goddess worship and that the goddess is fierce and bloodthirsty as well as benevolent and protective. Yet the

practice of animal sacrifice is rapidly dying out, being replaced by Vaisnava-type vegetarian offerings. The Vaisnava practice of vegetarianism has influenced worship at the shrines of all of the Seven Sisters, but nowhere has the influence been so strong as at the shrine of Vaisno Devi. The name Vaisno itself comes from *vaisnava* or its feminine form

vaisnavi,meaning literally pertaining to or a follower of the god Visnu. In the northwest of India, these terms commonly have the extended meaning of vegetarian. Thus, Vaisno Devi is the vegetarian goddess. She accepts no animal sacrifice and does not even permit pilgrims to wear leather shoes while making the twelve kilometer hike up the mountain to her cave temple. The theme of vegetarianism crops up again and again in the myths of Vaisno Devi and her sisters, with the figure of Bhairo playing a pivotal role.

As the title of this paper indicates, Bhairo is an ambiguous character. On the one hand, he represents all that is opposed to Vaisnava ideals of propriety: he is a *tantric*, 1a meat eater, a wine drinker, and a lascivious womanizer. On the other hand, he is the ideal devotee whom the virgin goddess Vaisno Devi rewards by granting two boons, moksa (liberation) and the homage of pilgrims. One is tempted to posit the explanation that the Vaisno Devi cult is an amalgam of at least two separate strands, a Vaisnava strand in which vegetarianism, chastity, and themes from the *Ramayana* are dominant and a Tantric or Sakta strand in which animal sacrifice, sexual union, and the theme of the goddess slaying the buffalo demon are dominant. According to this interpretation, the figure of Bhairo could be seen as a remnant or vestige of an earlier tantric substratum which was later supplanted by a dominant Vaisnava ideology and practice. As tempting as this explanation may be, I am not entirely satisfied with it, because the underlying structure of the Vaisno Devi myth presents itself as a unity with bhakti emerging as the major theme. I will demonstrate this point with a close look at the story of Vaisno Devi and Bhairo.

Oral and written sources for the myths of Vaisno Devi are reasonably homogeneous. The written sources consist of popular bazaar pamphlets in colloquial Hindi which pilgrims buy and read as part of the pilgrimage experience. Most of these popular pamphlets start out by telling the story of the great goddess as it appears in the second and third episodes of the Sanskrit text *Devi Mahatmyam*,that is, of her creation through the combined powers of the gods and her killing of the demons Mahisasura, Sumbha and Nisumbha. The inclusion of these mythic episodes clearly identifies Vaisno Devi as an aspect of the pan-Indian great goddess.

The story more immediately relevant to the cult of Vaisno Devi concerns her birth and establishment in the sacred geography of Trikut mountain. The first episode, detailing her birth and apotheosis, takes place in the Treta Yuga, connecting Vaisno Devi with Visnu and the *Ramayana*.The second episode, detailing the founding and discovery of the shrine, occurs in the present Kali Yuga, connecting Vaisno Devi with Bhairo and the Nath sect of yogis.

The following is an abridgement of the story taken from a popular pamphlet in Hindi. 2

> From time to time Mahasakti takes on different forms to destroy evildoers and protect devotees. At different times this Mahasakti who was born of the accumulated brilliance (*tej*)of the gods has taken on the forms of Mahakali, Mahalaksmi and Mahasarasvati, the symbols of *raj*, *tam*,and *sattvik* qualities.3
>
> In the Treta Yuga, when Ravana and the other demons worked their evil, the three Mahasaktis, in order to protect the dharma, pooled their powers and produced a sakti in the form of a beautiful divine maiden (*kanya*).They sent her to take birth in South India as the daughter of one Ratnasagara. She was given the name Trikuta. Later she became known as Vaisnavi or Vaisno, because she had been produced as a part (*amsa*)of Visnu.4
>
> At a very young age, the goddess Trikuta had already distinguished herself with supernatural (*alaukika*)powers and was attracting holy men and devotees from far away who came seeking her darsan. After some time, Trikuta with her father's permission went to the oceanside to perform austerities while meditating on Lord Rama and waiting for him. After Sita had been abducted by Ravana, Rama passed her way with his army of monkeys and saw the divine maiden seated in a deep trance (samadhi). She told him that she was performing austerities in order to obtain him as her husband. Rama replied that he had made a vow to remain faithful to only one wife, Sita, in this incarnation. But Trikuta would not change her mind. Finally, Rama promised that he would return later and marry her if she would recognize him. While returning to Ayodhya from Lanka, Rama appeared before her in the guise of an old man, but she did not recognize him. Rama consoled her by promising that in the Kali Yuga when he would incarnate as Kalki, she would be his consort. In the meantime, she should go to a cave on Trikut mountain in North India where the three Mahasaktis live and perform austerities there. Sending Hanuman and the other monkeys to be her sentries, he told her that she would become famous as Vaisno Devi.

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In this way, it is believed that the goddess became established in her cave. With the passing of the ages, the Mother showed her divine play (lila), and other stories arose. In the Kali Yuga the following story has become well known:

> About 700 years ago, in Hansali village near Katra there lived a Brahman named Sridhar who was a great devotee of the Mother. One day he was performing a kanya puja (worship of small girls as manifestations of the goddess) in order to obtain a son. When Sridhar began to feed the girls, Vaisno Devi, in the form of a divine maiden, appeared among them. She ordered him to host a grand feast for his village and the surrounding area the following day. He knew that she must be some kind of sakti, so he went from village to village inviting people to the feast. On the road he met a group of mendicants led by Gorakhnath and invited them as well. Gorakhnath issued a challenge that Sridhar would never be able to satisfy him, his disciple Bhaironath, and his 360 other disciples, as even Indra himself had been unable to satisfy them.
>
> The next day when the guests began to arrive, Sridhar was worried that he would not be able to feed them all, but they all managed to fit into his tiny hut and the divine maiden began to serve everyone food. When she started to serve Bhaironath, he objected to the vegetarian fare, demanding to be served meat and wine. The maiden replied that this is a Brahman's house and that one should accept whatever is offered in a vaisnava feast. Bhairo became angry and tried to grab her, but she was able to read the evil desires in his mind and disappeared.
>
> Bhairo set out in search of her, stopping at stations along the way [each of which is now a feature of the pilgrimage route]. The first place was Darsani Darvaza where one catches the first glimpse of Trikut mountain. Farther along the route, the goddess struck a rock with her arrow (*ban*)in order to produce water for her thirsty companion Langur Vir [a form of Hanuman]. This stream is now known as the Ban Ganga. At a place farther up the mountain, the goddess looked back to see if Bhairo was still following her. Because her footprints are still there, the place is called Caran Paduka. After some time, she came upon a small cave and climbed inside. Just as a child remains in its mothers's womb for nine months, so did the maiden remain in the cave for nine months performing austerities. Bhairo also arrived there and inquired from a nearby mendicant if he had seen a maiden. The mendicant said, "The one whom you consider to be an ordinary woman is actually the Mahasakti and Adikumari (primeval virgin)." But Bhairo ignored him and entered the cave. The Mother used her trident to make an opening and emerge from the

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> other end of the cave. This cave is now called Garbh-jun (Sanskrit*Garbhayoni*),and the place is called Adikumari.
>
> Bhairo continued to follow her even though she kept telling him to go back. Mahamaya (Great Illusion) was capable of doing whatever she wanted, but Bhairo's desire was also true! Finally, the goddess entered a beautiful cave on Trikut mountain, posting Langur Vir at the door as a guard. Bhairo attacked and almost killed him. At that point, Sakti took on the form of Candi [a fierce form of the goddess] and cut off his head. The head fell into the valley below, while the body remained at the entrance to the cave where it can be seen today as a large boulder. As his head was severed, Bhairo yelled out, 'O Adi Sakti (Primeval Energy), O Generous Mother, I am not sorry to meet death, because it is at the hands of the Mother who created the world. O Matesvari (Mother-Lord), forgive me. I was not familiar with this form of yours. Ma, if you don't forgive me, then the coming age will view me as a sinner and castigate my name. A mother can never be a bad mother. 5 Hearing these words again and again, the gracious Mother gave him the boon that after worshipping her, people would also worship him, and he would also attain moksa (liberation). If people worshipped at his shrine, their wishes would be fulfilled. A temple was built where Bhairo's head fell, and pilgrims stop there today on their way back from Vaisno Devi's temple.

In another version of the story,6 a multiform of Bhaironath appears as Bhairo Bali or Bhairav Bali, an evil king who tortured followers of the Vaisnava tradition. The episode occurs also in the Kali Yuga but before and in addition to the episode with Bhaironath. The king Bhairo Bali controlled a kingdom from the Satluj to the Jhelum Rivers in the Panjab. One day Vaisno Devi held a feast. Bhairo Bali saw her and wanted to marry her, but she refused, so he chased her up the

mountain. On the way, the goddess liberated many places from the rule of the evil king and established goddesses there. In this version, the story continues in the same way summarized above, repeating the section on Bhaironath.

After Vaisno Devi's beheading of Bhaironath, the story continues:

> Meanwhile, the devotee Sridhar who had hosted the feast was so upset when the divine maiden disappeared so precipitously that he stopped eating and drinking. To show him her grace, the Mother appeared before him and showed him her cave dwelling, taking him through the whole pilgrimage route. Upon awaking, Sridhar searched for the cave he had seen in his dream. He eventually found it and received there a face-to-face

> vision (*saksat darsan*)of the Mother. She gave him a boon of four sons and instructed him to continue worshipping her. Thus, Sridhar is credited with the propagation of Vaisno Devi worship, and the present day temple priests trace their descent from him.

Pilgrims who worship Vaisno Devi at Trikut mountain today trace the steps which the goddess took in her flight from Bhaironath, including the literal crawl through the womb-cave at Adi Kumari. Thus, they are symbolically re-enacting Bhairo's pursuit of Vaisno Devi. Bhairo at his shrine is called Bhairo Baba. He is known to possess people occasionally, usually men, just as Vaisno Devi possesses women. While worshipped by some pilgrims for favors, he is clearly subordinate to Vaisno Devi. 7 It used to be considered necessary for pilgrims to stop at Bhairo's shrine to pay homage to him after worshipping Vaisno Devi as she decreed in the charter myth, but in recent times this practice has decreased. Now a new path built by the Dharmarth Trust bypasses the Bhairo temple entirely. If one wants to visit it, one must make a special effort. But the myth of Bhairo with its tantric overtones is still well-known, despite the attempts of some religious leaders and pamphleteers to downplay Bhairo's disrespectful behavior and present him as a simple Nath or Yogi who was an ordinary devotee of Vaisno Devi.

As mentioned above, Vaisno Devi is worshipped in her cave shrine in the form of three lumps of stone called pindis, said to represent Mahalaksmi, Mahakali, and Mahasarasvati. The middle pindi, Mahalaksmi, is also called Vaisno Devi.8 In popular bazaar lithographs, she is portrayed as having eight arms and as being seated on a lion or tiger. She holds in her arms a discus, club, and conchemblems of Visnuand a trident, sword, and bow and arrowemblems of Siva. She holds a lotus in one of the remaining arms and displays the "fear-not" gesture (abhaya mudra) in the other. She is flanked on the right by the Vaisnava monkey god Hanuman, or Langur Vir. On the left is Bhairo in the form of Bal (child) Bhairo, white in color with four arms holding a severed head, drum, chowrie, and sword and accompanied by a white dog. This seems to be a gentle or tamed version of the Bhairo found in the Vaisno Devi myth and of the Bhairava who is a fierce form of Siva described in the Puranas and found as a folk deity all over India. This iconographic depiction of Vaisno Devi has become standard for most of the other goddesses (such as the Seven Sisters) in the Panjab Hills who are manifested in their temples in the aniconic pindi form. It could be called the generic Seranvali (Lion Rider or Lion Woman) poster iconography (see plate 18).



18. Popular calendar print of Vaisno Devi flanked by Hanuman and Bhairo against the background of a schematic map depicting important stopping places on her pilgrimage route. At the top are Brahma, Visnu and Siva tossing flowers. Photo by Kathleen Erndl.

Who is this Bhairo who accompanies Vaisno Devi as a bodyguard? The figure of Bhairo or Bhairava appears in several places in Puranic mythology, usually as a fierce form of Siva and with some connection to themes of decapitation or dismemberment. The locus classicus is in the myth of Bhairava's decapitation of Brahma in the *Skanda Purana*. 9 The story states that because of Brahma's disrespect, Siva takes on the form of Bhairava and cuts off one of Brahma's five heads, leaving him with the now customary four. The skull sticks to Bhairava's hand as evidence of his Brahmanicide. The severed head in the hand of Bhairo found in the Vaisno Devi iconography clearly identifies Bhairo with this Puranic Bhairava, and Bhairo's own decapitation at the hands of Vaisno Devi can be interpreted as a mythic reversal.

Most relevant to the goddess cycle of mythology is Bhairava's appearance in the story of Sati and the creation of the sakta pithas (seats of power), a story which developed out of the ancient myth of the destruction of Daksa's sacrifice.10 The Sakta version most commonly told in connection with the Vaisno Devi cycle can be summed up as follows:

> Sati, the wife of Siva, was a daughter of Daksa. One day Daksa held a sacrifice to which neither Sati nor Siva was invited. Sati died of sorrow (or threw herself into the fire) because of the slight. When Siva heard of Sati's death, he and his attendants destroyed Daksa's sacrifice. Siva became inconsolable, carrying Sati's body on his head, wandering over the earth doing the dance of destruction. The gods became anxious. According to one version, Brahma, Visnu, and Sani (Saturn) entered the corpse by yoga and dismembered it bit by bit. According to another version, Visnu alone cut up the body with his discus. The places where the parts of Sati's body fell became pithas, resorts of the goddess, each of which houses a different manifestation of the goddess along with a different form of Bhairava.

According to various schemes, there are four, seven, eight, forty-two, fifty-one or one-hundred and eight of these pithas. Sources vary as to which part of Sati fell in which place, with texts reflecting regional biases. According to popular belief connected with the northwest cult of the goddess, her tongue fell at Jvala Mukhi, breast at Kangra Devi, eyes at Naina Devi, forehead at Mansa Devi, feet at Cintpurni, and arms at Vaisno Devi. Thus, Bhairo can be loosely identified with Siva who manifests himself as the subsidiary consort-guardian Bhairava at goddess shrines.

Bhairo is depicted in the Vaisno Devi myth and in some popular religious art as a member of the Nath order of sadhus. The Naths, recognizable by their characteristic bored ears and large earrings, are an unorthodox group of Saivite mendicants who are found in fairly large numbers in the Panjab area. They have a close connection with the goddess cult in the area and even have rights to part of the temple of Jvala Mukhi, a sister to Vaisno Devi. As Elizabeth Visuvalingam points out in her article in this volume, the Naths have long been associated with Bhairava, seeing him as the epitome of the ideal of transgressive sacrality. In connection with the Vaisno Devi cult, the Naths represent a Saivite or tantric, as opposed to Vaisnavite, style of religious practice.

It is clear that Vaisno Devi is identified at least on one level with Durga, the killer of Mahisasura. This identification is made explicit in the popular pamphlets which tell the *Devi Mahatmyam* myths and then call Vaisno Devi an avatar or incarnation of the same goddess. One particular pamphlet has arranged the various stories into an ingenious cosmogonic scheme, "The Lion-rider in the Four Ages." 11 In the Satya Yuga, the three episodes of the *Devi Mahatmyam* (the killing of the Madhu-Kaitabha, Mahisasura, and Sumbha-Nisumbha) occurred; in the Treta Yuga, the part of the Vaisno Devi story that deals with Rama. In the Dvapara Yuga, there was no avatar, but the goddess gave power to Arjuna to fight the *Mahabharata* war, and the Pandavas performed their horse sacrifice.12 In the Kali Yuga there were the stories of Sridhar and Bhairo, Dhyanu Bhagat, Tararani, and others.

It is not unreasonable to see Bhairo as a multiform of Mahisasura, the buffalo demon, particularly when one remembers that Bhairo is a form of Siva and that Siva is often identified (particularly, as David Shulman points out,13 in South Indian sources) with the buffalo demon who is killed by his bride. In some versions of the Mahisasura story, the demon attains liberation through decapitation at the hands of the goddess just as Bhairo does at the hands Vaisno Devi. The bhakti interpretation would be that Bhairo chased her up the mountain out of devotion, however misplaced, and further proved his devotion through decapitation, the ultimate self-sacrifice.

The theme of decapitation appears in several other myths of the Vaisno Devi and Seranvali cycle. The offering of coconuts at goddess temples is explained by a charter myth in which the devotee Dhyanu Bhagat cuts off his own head and offers it to the goddess who promises that henceforth she will accept coconut offerings instead. In another story, the devotee Tararani, who is accused by her husband of impurity

for eating meat at a sweeper's *jagrata* (all night worship of the goddess), forces her husband to decapitate and eat his horse and son to satisfy the goddess. Their heads, like Dhyanu's, are subsequently restored by the goddess. The priests at the goddess temples tell about having witnessed devotees' tongues grow back after they cut them out and offered them to the goddess.

The *Ramayana* connection adds another rich dimension to the Vaisno Devi myth, resulting in some rather startling reversals. In the *Ramayana*,it is Rama who undergoes tests to win Sita. In the Vaisno Devi story, it is Vaisno Devi who performs austerities in order to win Rama, but ultimately loses him for failing to pass a test. In the *Ramayana*,it is Sita's *pativrata* (vow to remain faithful to one husband) which is emphasized. In the Vaisno Devi story, it is Rama's *patnivrata* (vow to remain faithful to one wife) which is emphasized. In the *Ramayana*,Ravana abducts a helpless Sita. In the Vaisno Devi story, Bhairo attempts but does not succeed in raping the independent and powerful Vaisno Devi. In the *Ramayana*,Rama kills Ravana in order to regain Sita. In the Vaisno Devi story, Vaisno Devi kills Bhairo without any help and makes it clear that she has gone through the whole chase scene as a way of displaying her lila, divine play, as the great Sakti who is the queen of illusion. The scene of Vaisno Devi "becoming Candi" and slaying Bhairo is reminiscent not only of Durga killing the buffalo demon but of Sita in tantric versions of the *Ramayana* (such as the

Adhyatma Ramayana)taking the form of Kali and killing Ravana herself. From this point of view, the events in the Vaisno Devi story mirror those in the *Ramayana*,and Bhairo can be seen as a multiform of Ravana, the Vaisnava embodiment of transgressive sacrality par excellence. But Ravana himself can be seen as a multiform of the buffalo demon, as Alf Hiltebeitel suggests. 14

At an explicit level in the Vaisno Devi story, there is an obvious tension between tantric (or Saiva/Sakta) values and Vaisnava values. Tantric values are represented by Bhairo who can be seen as the vira or hero who seeks union with the goddess through meat, wine, and sex. Vaisnava values are represented by Sridhar, the Brahman who performs traditional pujas and makes vegetarian offerings. However, the two are reconciled through the theology of bhakti. Bhairo and Sridhar can be seen simply as two different types of devotees. Bhairo takes a transgressive approach and attains moksa at the moment of the most extreme self-sacrifice. But the more moderate Sridhar is not neglected either; he receives the full darsan of the goddess and is

granted the boon of sons. Bhairo and Sridhar are two sides of the same coin. The goddess graciously accepts both types of devotion.

Notes

1. For the purposes of this paper, *tantra* is a religious practice or method which advocates reversals of accepted societal norms, transgressive sacrality par excellence. A *tantric* is a person who subscribes to such practices.

2. *Sri Vaisno Devi Darsana aura Nau Deviyon ki Katha* (Haridvara: Harabhajana Singha enda Sansa, n.d.) is the primary source I am using, mentioning other versions when relevant. The text given here is my own abridged translation which sticks closely to the colloquial and interpretative tone of the original.

3. These are the Hindi equivalents of the three Sanskrit *gunas* (qualities), rajas, tamas and sattva which are active, inert, and pure, respectively. Here the three major aspects of the goddess (Mahasakti, the "Great Energy") are being identified with the three gunas in the same way that the male deities Brahma, Siva, and Visnu often are.

4. This last sentence appears to be a *non sequitur*,as we have just been told that the Trikata was produced through the combined powers of the three great Saktis. The composite nature of the myth is evident here.

5.This is a vernacular allusion to the famous verse in the *Saundaryalahari*,traditionally attributed to Samkara, which says, "A son may be a bad son, but a mother can never be a bad mother."

6. Recounted in Balakrsna Sarma, *sangrahakarta* (compiler), *Mata Vaisno Devi* (Katra: Bhavani Pustaka Mahala, n.d.). A similar portrayal of Bhairo is found in a low budget feature length film on Vaisno Devi. The use of the name Bali is suggestive of the antagonist in the story of the Dwarf incarnation of Visnu and may be used in some versions of the Vaisno Devi story to strengthen Vaisnava associations.

7. Georgana Foster ("The Shrine of Vaisno Devi: Some Comparative Aspects of Iconography and Mythology," unpublished manuscript, 1983) has suggested that the new road was purposely built by the Dharmarth Trust in order to downplay the Tantric or Saivite elements of the cult which Bhairo suggests.

8. It may be significant that Vaisno Devi is identified with Mahalaksmi, the form of the goddess who in the second episode of the *Devi Mahatmyam* killed the buffalo demon, Mahisasura.

9. *Kasi Khanda*,15-16. This story is discussed by Diana L. Eck in *Banaras*: *City of Light* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 107-108 and 189-195 *passim*.Further discussion is found in E.-C. Visuvalingam's article in this volume.

10. For an extensive discussion of the development of this myth, see D. C.

Sircar, *The Sakta Pithas* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, second rev. ed., 1973). The versions mentioned in this paper are found in *Devi Bhagavata Purana* 7.30 and *Kalika Purana* 16.18, respectively.

11. *Cara Yugon men Seranvali* (Haridvara: Harabhajana Singha enda Sansa, n.d.).

12. This episode figures in the story of Tararani, an exemplary female devotee of the goddess.

13. "The Murderous Bride: Tamil Versions of the Myth of Devi and the Buffalo Demon," *History of Religions* 16,2 (1976), 120-147.

14. "Rama and Gilgamesh: The Sacrifices of the Water Buffalo and the Bull of Heaven," *History of Religions* 19,3 (1980), 187-223.

9
The Bir Babas of Banaras and the Deified Dead

Diane M. Coccari

Worship of the "deified dead" is common in the North Indian city of Banaras and the surrounding region. 1 Among the most prominent classes identified by Hindus are Birs (bir); Brahms (brahm); Pirs (*pir*),Shahids (*sahid*)and other "Muslim Deities" (*musalmani devata*);memorialized gurus, ascetics or yogis ("Babas:" *baba*);and local goddesses (*sati mai*, *caura mai*, *saiyari mai*,etc.). These stand out among other miscellaneous varieties of ghosts or spirits (bhut-pret: here a compound which does not distinguish the two elements) as being "deities" (devata) to their worshipers, a status often initiated by the establishment of a shrine and the onset of regular worship. There is some justification for viewing the deified dead as an analytical category: tradition holds that they share a human past; an untimely, heroic, sacrificial or otherwise extraordinary end to life; a continued presence at the site of the shrine; and a localized and particularized power to effect or influence certain exigencies in the lives of worshippers. Nonetheless, significant distinctions are made by believers among the various types of dead, and these deities share many characteristics and functions with other local and regional gods of less certain origin. As space does not permit a thorough treatment of all the above-named classes of deities, an overview of these figures followed by a more detailed description of those called Bir or Bir Baba (Bir = Sanskrit vira or "hero") will permit us to both contextualize a particular group and explore it at greater length. With the help of oral accounts and a folk song about a contemporary Bir, I will demonstrate something of the timeless and ongoing process of "deification" of a human hero and the nature of worship of these deities.

A. The Deified Dead: Some Examples

Ascetics' Tombs

Banaras contains many small neighborhood shrines which are said to be the samadhis (tombs) of beloved ascetics or guru figures. Although these are attended, worshiped, and petitioned much like other local shrines of the deified dead, the presence at the shrine of the ascetic has less to do with untimely death (akal mrtyu) than certain popularly held ideas about the spiritual exercises of the yogi. The range of usage of the term samadhi helps convey something of the perception of the presence of an entombed ascetic. For instance, it happens on occasion that a particular yogi will announce his intention to "take samadhi" (samadhi *lena*)for a specified number of days in a carefully prepared, airless tomb, as did one "Pilot Baba" in Banaras in December of 1981. The adept then theoretically utilizes his yogic skill to drastically retard bodily functions, obviating the need for sustenance and air for the duration of the entombment. The body will appear cold and lifeless, yet the germ of life remains in the highest cakra at the top of the skull. During this time the individual may be seen at other locations, as he is able to move about freely and perform other miracles in this condition. This is a dramatic example of the yogic meditation which eventually leads to the attainment of samadhi, in this

case the ultimate goal or stage of spiritual attainment after which the being of the yogi is permanently transmuted or transformed. Sometimes an ageing adept will state his intention to "take samadhi" to signal his departure from this life in his present body: he wills his death/release/immortality by this culminating yogic act. An ascetic buried in his samadhi/tomb is therefore understood to be present either as an immortal body or as a liberated, disembodied consciousness hovering about the shrine. Deceased sectarian guru figures, in particular, are addressed, attended, and worshiped as though they are living and still capable of intercession in the lives and spiritual progress of their followers. The memorialized yogi is viewed as a wakeful presence in much the same way as the other deified figures mentioned here, characterized by an imminence and responsiveness to human needs and concerns. The figure of the Birto be discussed belowis sometimes conflated with the entombed ascetic, a natural development in view of the existence in the tradition of warrior ascetics, yogis who become physically powerful as a result of ascetic observances, and heroes whose physical might implies disciplined spiritual attain-

ment, or who are assumed to have saintly characters. There are even Bir Babas in Banaras (named Jog or Jogi Bir) who are said to be yogis who met with violent and untimely ends, another conflation of the two traditions.

Female Figures

There are numerous village and neighborhood goddesses in the Banaras area who clearly emerge from this process of honoring or placating the human dead with shrine and ritual attention. The Satis and related goddesses (Chaura Mai, etc.) are the most obvious examples, but so too are the more ambivalent Maris and Bhavanis, ghosts generated from the untimely death of pre-pubescent (even unborn) female children.

Those with whom I spoke made it clear that the Sati's heroic act of self-sacrifice is not viewed as an untimely death in the normal sense: it is the optimal course that a wife follow her husbandwithout whom she is incompleteinto the next world, culminating her life of faithfulness and service. It is even said that the Sati may ignite the funeral pyre by the energy of her own sat"truthfulness" or "virtue," the accumulated essence of her extraordinary and life-long devotion. That the Sati is worshiped as a goddess even before her death testifies to the power and auspiciousness engendered by her wifely discipline and awe-inspiring courage. Although in theory she joins her husband in his fate, the very power of the event establishes the Sati as an earthly goddess; she is believed to be present at her shrine and able to bestow blessings upon petitioners. The general attitude toward Satis is one of honor and reverence, and the goddesses are depicted with corresponding benevolence. 2

This is not true of the Mari (*mari*)or Bhavani (bhavani). A greater effort is required to mollify these spirits and, if need be, transform and redirect their jealous anger into support for the living. Planalp discusses the process whereby malevolent Bhavanis are transformed by enshrinement and worship into the family goddesses of low caste, village Hindus.3 The intrinsic ambivalence of the female ghost/goddess permits easy identification with the disease-goddess cycle and other ambivalent goddess types.

Brahms

Small shrines to deities called Brahms or Brahm Babas are found in many Banaras neighborhoods and are scattered throughout the countryside. In the broadest sense, a Brahm is a ghost or deified ghost

of a member of the Brahman caste. 4 Equal to the spiritual stature of the living Brahman, the Brahm ranks high among other ghosts. In some cases Brahm shrines are established by Brahmans to "quiet" the spirit of a family member who tenaciously asserts his presence after death and fails to accept other forms of pacification. The Brahm is honored as an ancestor, is called upon to bless his kin, and may become in time the Brahm Baba of a wider and more diverse population. In other cases a shrine is established with the intention of inflicting ill upon those who have wronged the deceased figure or have had a hand in his demise. Not only is it most serious to be involved in the death of a Brahman because of the sin (*pap*)that results, but a Brahman may inflict his ghost like a powerful curse upon an enemy, resulting in a virulent form of posthumous retribution. This particular form of protest is available to a Brahman who feels himself

wronged yet is powerless to seek justice by other means, and is likely to occur in a confrontation with a wielder of temporal authority upon whom a Brahman is in some sense dependent. The theme of Brahman-Ksatriya (Thakur) interdependence/ animosity occurs quite frequently in this regard, as the Thakur is often the dominant or landowning caste in this area of North India. It occurs in the stories told about Harasu Brahm, the reigning deity at a regional pilgrimage site in nearby Bihar which draws large numbers of Banarasis for exorcism, fertility, and wish fulfillment. Banaras' own premier Brahm Baba site is Pisach Mochan Temple, an account of which may be found in the *Kasi Khanda* of the *Skanda Purana*.5In contrast with oral versions of the Pisach Mochan story which provide the mandate for the Brahm Baba's role in the liberation of disgruntled spirits, the Puranic version tends to divest the figure of the brahma pisaca or brahma raksasa of its authority as an embodied deity in favor of a parable of sorts on the subject of sin, karma, and salvation.

Muslim Deities

"Muslim Deities" are incorporated into the pantheons of many low caste and rural Hindus. In the last century it was common for an individual to declare himself a *Panchpiriya*aworshiper of the Panchon Pir (*pañco pir*)or Five (Muslim) Saintswhen asked to give his religious affiliation. The model for the aggregate of five being based, most likely, upon the Shiite quintet of Muhammad, Fatimah, Ali, Hasan, and Husain symbolized by the hand carried in Muharram processions, the expansion of the cult saw the progressive incorporation of local figures. In the Panjab, where the Indian version of the cult seems to have originated, the list of Panchon Pir consisted of prominent Sufi (mainly

Chisti) saints living in the 13th and 14th centuries; 6 as the cult spread to the south and east, there was a tendency for some of the saints to be replaced with historical or quasi-historical Islamic martial heroesthe religious warriors (*gazi*)or martyrs (sahid) whose localized cults were already established in a given region. Further expansion of the Panchpiriya cult resulted in the progressive dilution of Islamic elements and the inclusion of purely local Hindu or "tribal" deities and deified dead, including Satis and other goddesses. The most prominent figure associated with the Panchon Pir in the Uttar Pradesh/Bihar/Bengal area is Ghazi Miya (gazi miya) said to be Salar Mas'ud, the nephew of Mahmud of Ghazni. Legend has it that the hero became a martyr at the young age of nineteen when he "led an expedition into Oudh and was killed in battle at Bahraich in A.D. 1034."7 There is evidence in the late 13th and early 14th centuries of the great popularity of the legends of Salar Mas'ud, and the rapid growth of the cult centered at his tomb in Bahraich, in what is now Uttar Pradesh. The next several centuries witnessed the expansion of the institutions surrounding the tomb, the development of a hereditary priesthood, and the elaboration of cultic practices and oral traditions surrounding the hero. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, eyewitness reports of Europeans portray the tomb of Ghazi Miya at Bahraich as a major pilgrimage center with an annual fair which drew 50,000 to 100,000 pilgrimsboth Hindu and Muslimfrom all over India. Replicas of the Bahraich tomb were to be found in other North Indian cities and towns, serving as localized centers of the cult.8 In addition to the pilgrimage and tomb-centered worship which continues to this day, the Panchon Pir are worshiped in the homes of low caste Hindus as family deities. Writers have described the household shrines from the Panjab to Bengal as consisting of (1) a small, earthen mound topped by a spear, trident, or hand-shaped piece of iron, (2) five wooden pegs, or (3) replicas of Muslim graves or tombs. Daily, weekly, and annual worship is performed in the usual manner for household deities, often assisted by a Muslim Dafali, the hereditary priest of Ghazi Miya.9 Although the influence of the Arya Samaj and corresponding Muslim fundamentalist movements have brought about a decline in the worship of Ghazi Miya, certain Hindu castes (most conspicuously the Doms in Banaras) continue to attend the local and Bahraich tombs and worship the quintet as family deities. Hindu attendance at the tombs of Muslim martyrs and saintswhether or not they are included in the Panchon Pirremains a visible phenomenon. In Banaras, the tomb of Bahadur Sayyid or Shahidsaid to be a martyr who later "revealed" himself (*jahir ho jana*)at his grave

through the working of miraclesoverflows with pilgrims on Thursday of each week. The water used to bathe the tomb is touted for its healing properties, and the saint is plied with written and silently expressed petitions for blessings and intercession. The courtyard is alive with possession activity; the predominantly low caste Hindu women resolve their struggles or destinies with possessing spirits under the authority of the resident saint or "Baba."

While in some senses the worship of Muslim deities by Hindus is specializedas the use of Ghazi Miya by a Hindu Bhagat (oracular devotee of the goddess) to assist in the removal of Muslim ghosts (*jinn*, *saitan*)thehousehold worship of Muslim deities, their position in many villages as guardians, and the general activity at tomb sites are analogous to that of the non-Islamic deified dead. In the role of Bhut Nath (or Jinn Nath: "Lord of Ghosts") in particular, the Pir/Shahid, Bir and Brahm are equally the sources of healing, wish fulfillment, and exorcism.

B. The Banaras Bir Babas

The most common representation of the Birs or Bir Babas 10 found on the periphery of Banaras' inner precincts and throughout surrounding villages is a primordial looking clay mound (pind, stup, thuha) set upon a raised platform (caura, *cautara*, *cabutara*).The practice of raising an earthen mound over the remains of the powerful and honored dead is an ancient one on the subcontinent, and was no doubt the tradition upon which the Buddhist *stupa* was based. In the Banaras area, this clay mound is the generic form for the propitiatory *sthan*11of the untimely dead, seen also as a memorial to a respected individual or to an act of heroism or self-sacrifice. The shrines of Bir, Brahm, Mari, Bhavani, the Muslim martyrs and saints of the Panchon Pir, Satis, and the samadhis of Nath sadhus may be marked with this type of aniconic image (see plate 19). This rough clay shrine may be made more permanent with cement and whitewash, or replaced by other aniconic constructions in the shape of tall, rounded cones, posts, or four-sided pyramids with small niches set in one side. In Western Bihara region contiguous with the Varanasi District of Eastern Uttar PradeshBir images are of carved wood or stone and have similarly evolved from a basic funerary marker, in this case a wooden post. As is true of aniconic images in general, there is a tendency to anthropomorphize the rough form over time. In the case of the mound or cone, a metal face of a "heroic" type with a large moustache is added to the featureless symbol;



19. The temple of Ahira Bir at Kolhua Vinayaka, Varanasi. An example of a cone or mound-shaped image. Photo by Diane Coccari.

the top of a wooden post is carved into a head followed by the outlines of a rudimentary body. This latter process is illustrated by the striking Bir images studied by Archer in Bihar. 12

Banaras' inner city neighborhoods contain a variety of Bir images. A sculptural fragment uncovered by construction or scooped up in nets from the Ganga may be established as a particular Bir by an individual inspired by a vision or dream of the forgotten figure. Numerous small, open-air shrines with empty niches may be identified as Birs, or sites marked only by sacred trees are known by the name of a Bir Baba. If anthropomorphic images are employed, they frequently take the form of militant looking ascetics, standing upright with topknot, loin cloth, and water pot; a club or battle axe slung over one shoulder (see plate 20). These latter images are one answer to the Birs' original lack of anthropomorphic iconography, and similar images are employed in the small shrines to ascetics (Babas) and other deified dead, perhaps minus the weaponry. The found images, too, provide an easy solution to the Birs' human form; the appearance of the fragment may even determine the figure's name, as "Naked Hero" for an image of a Jain Tirthankara, or "Headless Hero" for a decapitated sculpture of the Buddha.

It is the lower to middle ranking rustic classes that make up the majority of the Birs' followers, but particular shrines may draw members of any caste or class, hopeful of a blessing, cure or resolution to an intractable problem.13 Worshiped

chiefly by neighbors of the shrines, the Birs are approached most frequently on Tuesdays and Sundays and during seasons of festival activity. It has become very popular of late to organize a *varsik srngar*,an "Annual Decoration" Ceremony in imitation of the ritual programming of the city's major temples. The small shrines are newly whitewashed, painted and decorated; *arati* puja, all night performances of devotional and folk music, and even martial competitions among the city's various wrestling *akharas* are financed by neighborhood donations. The neighborhood and village Birs that are the guardian deities or Dih Babas of particular domains are propitiated commensurate to this role. The Dih Baba (sometimes paired with a Sati or disease goddess) controls the ingress and egress of all supernatural forces and influences across village or neighborhood boundaries; his realm of authority extends to minor village deities, ghosts, other more vaguely defined magical energies, and-by extension-those humans who would wish to manipulate those beings and forces. Most individuals find occasion to approach the Dih Baba for permission or assistance within his realm of authority;



20. A painting of Daitra Bir Baba on the exterior wall of the deity's small temple in Chait Ganj, Varanasi. An example of "militant ascetic" iconography. Photo by Diane Coccari.

exorcistic healers (*ojha*)must cultivate a working relationship with their Dihs if they are to find success in their manipulations of the supernatural. Ojhas, in particular, introduce what we might call a "transgressive" element into the Bir cult: some engage in an eclectic blend of sorcery and tantric ritual (popularly called tantra-mantra), including blood sacrifice and offerings of liquor and cannabis, and it is through this "tantric procedure" (tantrik paddhati) that worship of the Bir is thought to yield the most immediate results.

To the devotee, the Birs are powerful local deities (devata) who are "awake" (*jagta hai*)and attentive to human needs. Their power is derived from the violent, untimely, tragic or unjust nature of their deaths, while the character or inherent nature of the individual also has implications for the nature and vigor of the spirit. The jealous anger of these souls, directed at the living, may be "quieted" (*santi karna*)by the establishment of a shrine and ongoing ritual attention, and transmuted into a more benign and protective presence. Any low caste person may become a Bir, but certain castes have a propensity to remain active at the locations of their shrines, and are therefore more likely candidates for posthumous deification. Certain castes (Teli, Nat) are identified in people's minds with magic and the supernatural, and make particularly fearsome ghosts. Others, like members of the Ahir caste, are of a heroic substance which has implications for the vigor of their spirits. Many of the Banaras area Bir shrines are said to contain Ahir deities.

The Ahir have long maintained a tradition of caste heroism. Although many, especially urban, Ahirs have moved into other professions, the traditional occupation of this caste is cattle-keeping, herding and breeding, and providing the milk of their animals. Typical of pastoral groups and in keeping with cattle herding and the related activities of cattle raiding and protection, the Ahir cherish a view of themselves as brave fighters and leaders among a collection of allied castes with whom they are found in village settings. The Hindi oral epic *Loriki*understood by many Ahirs of Eastern Uttar Pradesh to be the oral history of their casteeulogizes the heroism of their ancestor Lorik Yadav and provides historical proof of Ahir martial glory. 14 The Yadava Movement of this century, with its claim of Ksatriya status for the Ahir, is also testimony to this heroic identity.15 The tendency of the Ahir to establish memorials to their untimely dead and to worship these as caste heroes is no doubt part of this history and self-perception. Many of these shrines remain family, clan or caste deities, or guardians of cattle fertility, safety and health. Others become village guardian

deities or attain the status of regional pilgrimage sites known for exorcism and wish fulfillment.

What follows is the story of one such Ahir Bir Baba. Oral accounts and a folk song about the hero's tragic death demonstrate the timeless process of heroic death and deification.

C. Bachau Bir: The Making of a Contemporary Bir Baba

The story of Bachau Bir is an excellent example of how people perceive the emergence of a deity known as Bir Baba, in this case through the martyrdom of a local hero. Bachau or Bachan Yadav was an historical individual who lived in a small village outside of Varanasi, who met a violent death at the hands of caste enemies. The estimates of informants and certain details of the story place the critical incidents of the tale during the 1920s. There is no doubt much truth to the accounts of his death, but more important than the determination of historical accuracy is an appreciation of the oral traditions surrounding this figure, now represented by a tall, conical image in a small roadside temple. Many people in the city know some version of Bachau's story, but it is told with particular vehemence by members of the Ahir caste. The existence of a *biraha* song, written by a local Ahir songwriter about the climactic events which resulted in Bachau's death, has no doubt contributed to the ability of informants to relate this portion of the story in such vivid detail. 16 The great-nephew of the hero tells other stories about his locally famous relative:17

> Bachau Yadav was an Ahir who was very brave and strong. He was a wrestler and carried a fighting staff (*danda*)so big that no one else could lift it. He had the strength and power of ten men. He was honorable, and would always deal with his enemies fairly. He would never fight anyone who was defenseless. If he saw that someone was in trouble, he would help them. His "liver" (*kaleja*)was bigger than anyone's; it weighed 14 *pau*.18
>
> When Bachau was a young man, he fought with a tiger. The tiger came out of the jungle to the east of Sir Govardhanpur, and chased Gokal Chaudhari, the village headman. The headman, out of fear, climbed a tree and began to shout for help. Everyone else ran away, but Bachau Yadav caught the tiger in his arms and began to beat it. He called to the other villagers, "Will you wait for the tiger to eat me before you will come?" So the village

people came and started to beat the tiger. Bachau killed this tiger, and the authorities later gave him a reward.

Bachau had many enemies, especially among the Thakurs. He had a longstanding feud with Riddhi and Siddhi Singhthe two sons of Ambe Singhand Babua Singh, who was a wrestler. He had also made an enemy of Gudari Mama, who was an associate of Bachau from a Yadav j*ati*.Gudari Mama killed his brother's wife for no reason, so Bachau had him "outcasted" (*samaj se nikal diya*).The headman, whom Bachau saved from the tiger, outcasted Gudari Mama on Bachau's word. This ended his eating, drinking, smoking the *hukka*,etc., with the Yadavs. Gudari Mama did not accept this social punishment and agree to perform the appropriate expiation, but met with Bachau's Thakur enemies and schemed to take revenge upon him.

This account serves as a prelude to the biraha song about the hero. Bachau's enmity with the Thakurs was to come to a tragic end:

The Song of Bachau Bir 19

My Rama O Ram

It happened right in Sir Karhiya, next to Hindu University,
where Malviji had some land.
This tale of mighty Bachau Bir, friends,
Listen to this story beyond compare, friends.

They say that Malviji had some land
where Ksatriya Ambe Singh also had a claim.
Ambe Singh went there and took his stand.
Refusing to back off, Malviji stood his ground.

Malviji regarded Bachau as his younger brother.
He said, "Have the deed written in your name."
The surveyor would come to measure the land, friends.
Listen to this story beyond compare, friends.

There was an old feud between Bachau and Riddhi-Siddhi.
The Thakurs wanted to kill him by deception.
Leaving his axe at home, Bachau went out empty-handed.
His wife pleaded, "Take it! You are dealing with enemies!"
Bachau said, "Today I will go without a weapon."
"I too will take my place among gentlemen."

But the Thakur gang was powerful, friends.
Listen to this story beyond compare, friends.

> [SPOKEN] Bachau Bir's wife said to her husband, "Take your axe with you." He answered, "Very important people will come, so I will go empty-handed when the field is measured." But the Thakur gang was powerful, friends. People had already gathered . . .

The clouds spread across the sky.
The manly, tiger-like Bachau left his house.
The clouds spread across the sky.

The mighty Riddhi-Siddhi had an old feud with Bachau.
At every step Bachau thought, "The Thakur gang is powerful."
Going to the surveying of the field, his eyes grew red with rage.
Before him were eighteen men, their lances and spears sharpened.
Eighteen young Thakur men, brave and alert as tigers.
The tape was taken up. The measuring began. Young Bachau stood alone.

The clouds spread across the sky.
They began to taunt him in front of the official.
The clouds spread across the sky.

Babua Singh spoke sharply, "Don't miss this chance, men!"
"Block Bachau's way. Don't let him escape."
In this spirit Gudari Mama spoke.
The day was Monday. "Don't miss this chance, men!"

The official realized that there would be a fight.
He went up to Bachau and said,
"You are in great danger."
("Don't miss this chance men!")
"Get in my carriage and come away with me."
But Bachau said loudly, "Today I will see how tough the Thakurs are."

The clouds spread across the sky.
"I will break their skulls and beat them with my fists."
The clouds spread across the sky.

Taking up their weapons, the Thakur gang moved in.
Shouting a war cry, the men came out into the field.
Their staffs, knives and spears were flashing.
They challenged Bachau by twisting their moustaches.
"Today . . . in this field."
Giving this challenge, the Thakur gang moved in.
Steadily Bachau said, "Don't be so proud."
"I killed your father. You too may lose your life."
"Riddhi-Siddhi, don't be so proud. Your whole family may be destroyed."
"If my staff is to rain down blows, sparks will fly."
The Thakur gang moved in.
In the face of the assembled gang, Bachau Bir did not run.
Bachau asked the Thakurs for half an hour's time.

The clouds spread across the sky.
"Or allow me to have a staff," he asked the crowd in the field.
The clouds spread across the sky.

> [SPOKEN] From the time that they surrounded him,
> Bachau asked, "Please give me a staff." But they completely closed him in.

Babua's Thakur men did not hesitate.
Running toward him, every man leaped upon Bachau.
Staffs began to fly with a swishing sound.

Jhimmal Yadav broke away and began to run.
Grabbing his staff, it seemed like Bachau set it on fire.
He chased them five *bighas*, beating them back.
He started to move in the direction of his house.
Ahead was a wire fence that surrounded the university.
Catching his foot, the man like a tiger fell.

[SPOKEN] Alone, fighting eighteen young men, he chased them five *bighas*. He thought, "Now I can escape and run toward my house." Ahead was the university, and surrounding it was a barbed-wire fence. He caught his foot and fell.

Young Bachau fell like a fallen tree.
Sticks and knives again fell upon him.
As sticks and knives again fell upon him,
Out in front came Gudariya Mama.
He said, "If you leave this man alive,"
"If he lives, he will find us and kill us."
"If he lives, he will find us and kill us."
So he beat him with two staffs.

[SPOKEN] Gudari Mama, who was Bachau's own uncle, said, "If we let Bachau go and he lives, then the lives of eighteen men will not be spared. Finish him today. Gudari Mama beat him with two staffs.

When Bachau's body was carried to Bhelupur Police Station,
In the middle of the journey, Bachau attained the Heaven of Heroes.

The clouds spread across the sky.
The corpse was quickly taken for an autopsy.
The clouds spread across the sky.

Every Ahir went with the body, O didn't they?
Bachau Bir's heart weighed fourteen pounds.
He could drink the milk of one buffalo, and eat three pounds of food.
Listen, listen,
Tears started to flow and fall from many eyes, O didn't they?
One great fighter had left the Yadav family.
Yadav Guru Bihari was the first to praise the hero in song.
Pattu's songs are also famous, aren't they?

Hearing the news of Bachau's death, all of Banaras-Kashi was sad.
The Judge gave the ruling, "Hang Riddhi-Siddhi!"

The clouds spread across the sky.
Yadav Ram Sakal speaks this with flowing eyes.

The clouds spread across the sky.

My Rama O Ram

The particulars of the construction of Bachau Yadav's shrine are unclear and further obscured by the hagiography that inspires the biraha song and other, especially Ahir, renderings of the tale. The song concludes that Bachau attained the "Heaven of Heroes" (bir gati) immediately upon his death. Those who share this view are likely to refer to the shrine as a *yadgar* or "memorial" established to honor and remember the hero. At the same time, Bachau's great-nephew tells that the wife of Babua Singhone of Bachau's enemiesbegan to light lamps at the place where Bachau died before any shrine was built, ostensibly to appease Bachau's angry spirit. The shrine itself was built by Bachau's family, who may have been similarly contacted by the spirit of their slain kinsman. Local people blame the more recent troubles that have visited Bachau's familyincluding the madness of a grandsonon their periodic neglect of the shrine. Thus Bachau is believed to have "bothered" (*tang karna*)both friends and enemies after his death, necessitating acts of ritual propitiation, including the establishment of a sthan.

In Bachau's case, the elements of the bhut-pret complex are clear: The young man's death was violent and unjust, the type of death an angry ghost is likely to avenge. Yet his Ahir eulogizers, themselves perpetuating a long tradition of Ahir heroism, choose to hyperbolize the strength (expressed in part by the size of his "heart/liver"), bravery and nobility of their hero, pronouncing bir gati as the fate of their castemate. This particular blending of heroic themes and ideas about the behavior of ghosts is characteristic of the Bir phenomenon. Bachau's story illustrates the process whereby a living individual becomes a local deity: a tragic death, the ghost of the victim contacting the living through a vision, dream or possession, the building of a propitiatory shrine to house the spirit and provide a place of worship, the heroic hagiography. Critical to this process is the establishment of a shrine and the onset of worship. It is said that the activity of worshiping

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serves to increase a deity's power. As one informant put it, "Like the way in which we 'give respect' to our leaders and they become powerful, in that way the [Bir's] power increases from worship." If a Bir is discovered to be particularly "awake" and effective in "getting things done," he draws a wider circle of devotees, which further increases his power. The power engendered from a premature and violent death is channeled to constructive purposes. The ghost who might ravage the health and well-being of a family or village may be enlisted as its special protector. Yet intrinsic to the nature of the bhut cum devata is a continued ambivalence. The Bir may be angered by the neglect of his shrine, lash out for no apparent reason, or remain inexplicably silent.

Now, his great-nephew says, Bachau does not bother anyone. He is worshiped as a deity (*devata ke rup me pujate hai*),and acts for the welfare of all. When people come to him with special desires, they are always fulfilled. The modest brick building that houses Bachau Bir's memorial faces the Banaras Hindu University wall where he is said to have fallen in flight from his enemies. The shrine is mainly attended by people from villages in the immediate area. Bachau Bir is not the Dih Baba or guardian deity of a village (an older Bir shrine serves this function), but is the special patron of certain castes, especially the Ahir. The Annual Decoration Ceremony at the small temple is held on the day of Govardhan Puja, another festival historically linked to the Cowherd caste.

Notes

1. Research for this article was conducted from September 1980 to May 1982 under the auspices of the American Institute of Indian Studies. Most of the topics in the following discussion are covered in greater detail in my dissertation, "The Bir Babas of Banaras: An analysis of a Folk Deity in North Indian Hinduism," University of Wisconsin 1986.

2. Although I think that this attitude represents a large body of opinion regarding Satis, it must be noted that I spoke mainly with men about this subject. The total benevolence of the Sati is problematical: It would not surprise me to find an aura of ambivalence surrounding some of these figures, especially given the possibility of coercion.

3. Jack M. Planalp, "Religious Life and Values in a North Indian Village," Diss. Cornell University 1956, 576-9.

4. There are female Brahms, but most of the public shrines tend to be for

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male figures. I have been told several stories of female Brahms bothering their husband's second wives, but these were "quieted" (santi karna) or "seated" (*bithana*)at a temple of a powerful Brahm Baba.

5.The Sanskrit *pisacamocana* story is found in the *Kasi Khanda* of the *Skanda Purana*,part 54.

6. William Crooke, "Panchpiriya," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (1917), IX, 600-601. See also Crooke, *Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (London, 1926; rpt. Delhi: Chand & Co., 165-166; Richard Greeven, *The Heroes Five* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1892); Kerrin G. V. Schwerin, "Saint Worship in Indian Islam: The Legend of the Martyr Salar Masud Ghazi," in *Ritual and Religion Among Muslims in India*,ed. Imtiaz Ahmad (Delhi: Manohar, 1981), 146-151; R. C. Temple, *Legends of the Panjab* (Patiala: Language Dept., 1962), I, 98-120.

7. Crooke, *Religion*,160.

8. Schwerin, "Saint Worship," 146-151.

9. Little has been written about the Dafalis, the drummer-priests of Ghazi Miya. Crooke mentions that they are converted Mirasis, a low Hindu musician caste (note 14 in Schwerin, "Saint Worship," 154), but the period of their conversion and assumption of the priestly role is unknown. They are, in any case, the main bearers of the oral traditions regarding the life of Ghazi Miya and his retinue in the form of folk songs, some of which have been translated by Greeven in his *Heroes Five*.Planalp describes the worship of Ghazi Miya by a Dafali in a Teli household ("Religious Life," 768-770). See also E. Visuvalingam in this volume.

10. A vira in Sanskrit is a "brave, eminent man, hero or chief," one who possesses virya, "manliness or manly vigour, valour, strength, power, energy, virility." Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 1006. The term *baba* is used as one of endearment and respect for male kin (a son, husband, father, paternal grandfather) or of deference for an ascetic or very old man. This use of *baba* to express closeness and respect is easily extended to a venerable male deity who has a personal relationship to the worshipper.

11. The Hindi *sthan* or Bhojpuri *asthan* derives from the Sanskrit *sthana*,a "place, spot, locality, abode, dwelling, house, site": Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1876; rpt. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 1263. These may also be called *devasthan*, *bhutasthan* or *birasthan*,depending upon the nature of the being felt to inhabit a site.

12. See W. G. Archer, *The Vertical Man*: *A Study in Primitive Sculpture* (London, 1947).

13. The castes recorded by this researcher included Ahir, Gaderiya, Kunbi, Kurmi, Kumhar, Mali, Pasi, Bhar, Rajbhar, Kol, Gond, Manjhi, Mallah, Khatik, Teli, Dhobi, Dom, Chamar, and Rai Das.

14. See Shyam Monohar Pandey, *The Hindi Oral Epic Loriki* (Allahabad, 1979) and *The Hindi Oral Epic Canaini* (Allahabad, 1982), and Arjundas Kesari, *Lorikayan*

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(Mirzapur: Lokruchi Prakashan, 1980) [in Hindi].

15. See M. S. A. Rao, *Social Movements and Social Transformations*: *A Study of Two Backward Classes Movements in India* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1979), and "Caste and the Indian Army," *The Economic Weekly* 16 (August 29, 1964), 1439-1443.

16. The term *biraha* is said to derive from the Sanskrit *viraha* meaning "separation." *Biraha* is a folk music genre originating with the Ahir caste. The older forms (*khari biraha*)somecontaining the puranic themes of Krishna and his separation from the Gopisare remembered only by a handful of old men and are very rarely sung. Bihari Lal Yadav is said to have originated a newer form of biraha in the early 1900's. The biraha that is current today is a mixture of folk song genres and tunes from Hindi films. The songs cover a variety of moods and subjects: devotional, heroic, social,

political, humorous, bawdy, and romantic.

17. From an interview with Makar Yadav, conducted by O. P. Sharma in November, 1982.

18. A *kaleja*,translated as both *liver* and *heart*,is understood as the organ in the body which is the seat of knowledge and power. If one eats the kaleja of an individual (as witches are purported to do), one may obtain these things from them. By reporting that Bacau's *liver* or *heart* weighed 14 pau (very big and heavy), the singer is praising his superhuman might.

19. "Bachau Bir" was written by Ram Sakal Yadav, son of Pattu Yadav, the foremost *cela* of Bihari Lal Yadav, the originator of modern biraha (see the song's signature lines). The song as recorded was sung by Hans Raj Yadav in Varanasi in 1982. I would like to thank Hank Heifetz, Dr. Ashok Kalrah and O. P. Sharma for their help with translation and transcription.

10
The Capitulation of Mani: A Conversion Myth in the Cult of Khandoba

John M. Stanley

Introduction

The cult of Khandoba 1 is a large, principally non-Brahman cult in the Western Deccan.2 Members of virtually all castes in the region are numbered among its devotees, including a few Brahmans and even some Muslims, but it is dominated by the peasant castes (Marathas and Kunbis), local shepherds (Dhangars), fisher folk (Kolis), watchman and ex-criminal castes (Ramoshis), and several formerly *balutedar* castes (traditional village servants) including gardeners, tailors, leather workers, and the formerly untouchable Mahars and Mangs. Temples of this god are found from Nasik in the north to Hubli in the south and from the Konkan coast on the western edge of Maharashtra to the western edge of Andhra and north west edge of Karnataka. Hundreds of small temples are found in the villages in this area, nearly all with a charter myth tracing the god's first appearance in the village to one of the eleven "especially wakeful places" (jagrt ksetras) of Khandoba.

The eleven jagrt ksetras of Khandoba all claim to be the original place of Khandoba, the place where he came to earth to conquer two demons, Mani and Malla, who were threatening the earth (or in some stories, merely the local region) with some form of chaos. The dominant jagrt ksetra in the northern part of the cult (and arguably throughout

the whole of the Deccan) is Jejuri in Poona District of Maharashtra. 3

The stories of the battle between Khandoba and the two demons are preserved in two forms: oral stories told both ritually and casually by Vaghyas4 and other cult functionaries, and written accounts preserved in both Sanskrit and Marathi. The principal written version of the myth is the *Mallari Mahatmya*.It exists in both Sanskrit and Marathi versions5 and claims to be part of the *Brahmanda Purana*.The *Jayadri Mahatmya* and *Martand Vijay* are later than the *Mallari Mahatmya* and tell much the same story, but include some of the additional details contained in the oral stories.

A. Khandoba's Victory over Mani and Malla

The Frame Story

One of the most interesting features of the *Mallari Mahatmya* version of the Khandoba myth is the frame story in which it is set. The *Mallari Mahatmya* begins and ends with a scene in Siva's private quarters in the Jewel Hall on Mount Kailas. In the opening scene Parvati begs her Lord Siva to tell her a very special secret, a particularly important secret

that has two parts. First, she wants to know which of all the places in the world is Siva's "favorite and most sacred place, the most wonderful of places where men can be granted all worldly desires, salvation, and eternal enjoyment." Secondly, she begs to know which particular avatar is Siva's favorite avatar, through which he is most accessible to men. Siva grants Parvati's request by telling her a story, the principal function of which, as we shall see, is to provide a charter myth for one particular place (Prempur) as the premier place in all the world for the granting of navas.6

The Story of the Avatar of Martand Bhairav

The story that Siva tells Parvati is this. Once, long ago, in the Krta age, the seven sons of Dharma established a beautiful and holy ashram on Mount Manical. There, accompanied by their wives and families, they practiced austere devotion and created a beautiful atmosphere where trees blossomed plentifully, where flowers were always in bloom and where there was no enmity or hostility. Even animals with natural hostilities played peacefully together, and those with a ferocious nature offered no threat to human beings. Indeed, everyone and everything was at peace.

Then a demon chief named Malla, accompanied by his younger

brother, Mani visited the ashram and began to perform terrible acts of destruction. They tore up the gardens that the rsis had planted; they destroyed all of the flowers and pulled the trees out by the roots. They raped the rsis' wives and murdered their children and threw the dead bodies into the wells, and they slaughtered and ate the rsis' cows and elephants.

The rsis were finally so troubled by the chaos the demons produced that they decided to go to the gods to ask for help. They went first to Indra, but he told them that he could do nothing to stop the demons because they had such great powers of devotion. They were able to perform tapas 7 for long periods of time at great intensity, thus producing large quantities of energy. Indeed, they had practiced this extreme devotion to Brahma for many years, standing on a single toe and subsisting on smoke alone. So great was the energy they had generated that Brahma was forced to grant them any boon they asked. They asked to be able to do whatever they wanted with impunity, to be able to plunder, rape, and pillage without any human, demon, or god being able to stop them or kill them. Brahma granted this boon and so they were invincible. Indra could do nothing. The rsis then proceeded to Vaikuntha to ask Visnu for help, but the answer was the same. Nothing could be done to stop the demons. Their devotion to Brahma had been too powerful.

The rsis then made the long journey to Mount Kailas and told their story to Siva. Here the response was very different. Siva reacted to the news of the demons' chaos-producing destruction with fearsome anger and made a vow of his own. He vowed that the destruction of the two demons was imminent. He rose from his throne in a rage, tore out by the roots a lock (jata) of his matted hair, and threw it on the fire altar, instructing the terrified rsis to anoint it with ghee. The smoke from the matted hair and burning ghee took the form of a monstrous and fierce spiritual power, a female monster, a vicious and terrible engine of destruction with fearful teeth and jaws and a loose, long tongue. She was named Mahamari (later to be known as Ghrtamari). She immediately made a vow to fight the demons to their destruction.8

Then the Lord Siva, himself, declared his determination to take the avatar of Martand Bhairav and descend to the earth to organize an army to defeat the terrible demons. Martand Bhairav was a form of Siva never seen before, a form in which "he would freely grant power and protection to men in return for even a small amount of devotion." His appearance was like that of the sun. His clothing was golden and flaming, his teeth like flashing rubies; and he was surrounded by

barking dogs. 9 In this new form the Lord Siva organized a large army to do battle against the two demons. The leader of his army was Skanda, whose own personal corps of soldiers was mounted on peacocks. Skanda's lieutenants, each leading a corps of soldiers, were Indra, Agni, Yama, Nairrta, Varuna, Kubera, Brahma, Visnu, the sun, the moon, and Ganesa, whose troops had elephant heads and rode mouse-faced horses. Siva, himself, in his flaming form of Martand Bhairav, was mounted on his usual vehicle, Nandl.10

The army of Malla was equally impressive. His corps of troops11 was comprised of countless demon warriors mounted

on elephants. Each battalion of demons was led by a fierce demon general. Mani, mounted on his white horse, was the leader of the whole army, the counterpart of Skanda, while Malla hovered as overseer of the whole battle, a kind of master magician general. After the initial battle resulted in a terrible slaughter of most of the demon army, Malla called on each of the demon generals to do individual battle with Khandoba's battalion leaders. One by one Malla's generals were defeated until only Mani was left.

The Capitulation of Mani

Enraged at the defeat of his generals, Mani charged directly at Khandoba to engage him in individual combat. A long and fierce battle followed in which Mani fought extremely well, surprising Khandoba with his magical ability to change shapes and assume different forms. Finally, still astride his white horse, having assumed the form of a horse-faced demon, neighing so fiercely that he agitated the whole world, Mani was worn down by Khandoba's superior strength and knocked from his horse by one of Khandoba's missiles. He fell, along with his white horse, into a water tank. From that day forward the tank was named *Manical* and it remains in that place to this day.12

Khandoba approached the fallen demon and placed his foot on the demon's head (in the posture of a conqueror), but just as the sole of his foot touched the conquered demon's head, Mani experienced a total change of heart. Indeed, he reached out to take hold of Khandoba's foot as it was approaching his head, placed the foot of the conquerer on his own head, and offered a great hymn of devotion to the victor so genuine that Khandoba was moved to offer him one final boon. Mani asked for three things: 1) that all the people of earth should have great wealth, good fortune, enjoyment, sons, horses, and elephants in this life and, after this life, liberation; 2) that Mani should, from that time forward, always reside in Khandoba's presence;13 and 3) that Khandoba

should accept Mani's horse as his vehicle (*vahan*).Khandoba granted Mani's three-part boon immediately. 14

Malla's Defeat and His Final Request

After Mani's defeat and wondrous reform, Malla was given an opportunity to similarly surrender. He refused, vowing to fight on to destroy gods, men, and animals "until the heavens are godless, society is without human beings, and the earth without even one last snake."15 Then, issuing a loud war cry so fierce that, as far away as Mount Kailas, Parvati's crown fell from her head, Malla led what was left of his badly damaged army onto the battlefield. He was immediately engaged by Ghrtamari, the "terrible instrument of destruction" that Siva had created from the lock of his matted hair. Ghrtamari began to devour Malla's elephants and chariots and horses and foot soldiers, chewing iron, bone, and tusks into ashes and dust with her terrible jaws. After all but Malla were devoured, she turned to face him in individual battle, but she was no match for his terrible strength and magical powers. One hundred arrows from Malla's magic bow were lodged in her head, twenty-seven in each breast, and another hundred through her neck and shoulders.

When Ghrtamari was near defeat, Khandoba, taking pity on her torture, came to her rescue and engaged Malla personally in one last terrible battle, which tested the full limits of the magical skills of both god and demon. Finally, Malla was knocked to the ground unconscious. Khandoba approached the supine demon, placed his foot on his head and was about to sever his head from his body when Malla also repented (or appeared to repent) and offered to Khandoba a hymn of seemingly unmitigated praise. Khandoba assumed that Malla was sincere in his praise and granted him one final boon. Malla asked for three things: 1) that his name should always be pronounced before that of his conqueror, 2) that his head should always be under Khandoba's foot or under the feet of his devotees, and 3) that he should be given as *naivedya* the bodies of ten thousand men.16 Khandoba granted the first boon by taking the name Malhari (killer of Malla) or, in the more Sanskritized versions, Mallari (enemy of Malla); he granted the second by cutting off the demon's head and placing it under the threshold of his temple where it would always be under the feet of his devotees (see plate 21);17 and he granted the third by giving Malla the head of a goat and saying: "You would ask to eat more men? You want the flesh of your own kind as naivedya? In this way you shall have it. You will forever have the head of a goat and receive naivedya of goats. Thus



21. The head of the demon Malla under the threshold of the Khandoba temple at Jejuri in Purandhar Taluk, Pune District, Maharashtra. Photo by John Stanley.

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you will always be devouring your own kind, and thus is your final boon fulfilled."

The Closing of the Frame

After the final destruction of Malla, the rsis all gathered to offer praise and devotion to Khandoba for their deliverance from the destructive demons. So great was their devotion that Khandoba offered them any one boon they would ask. They asked that he not leave them, but remain always there at that place where he had overcome the demons. Khandoba was very pleased with their devotion and granted their wish, and on the sixth lunar day of the bright fortnight of the month of Margasirsa 18 he returned to that place with his sakti, Mhalsa (an avatar of Parvati herself), in the form of a svayambhu lingam19 and a svayambhu yoni.

Then all of the rsis and all of their families and all of the Yaksas and Nagas and all of the men of the earth came to that place and offered devotion to the lingam and yoni. Khandoba and Mhalsa were so pleased by this devotion that they came out of the lingam and yoni and declared to the great array of gathered devotees that they would grant yet one more boon: From this time forth all who come to this place with devotion would receive "abundant cattle, sons, horses, happiness, treasure, territory, women, jewels, victory, success in disputes with opponents, glory, salvation, and protection." Khandoba added some suggestions of forms of worship that he considered especially pleasing to him,20 and declared his special accessibility to people of low caste:

> Even if a person is of low caste, he is always dear to me. Whatever is to be given should be given to him and whatever is to be received, should be received from him. He deserves the same respect as 1.21

Then the scene returns to Kailas where Siva is telling Parvati the story that she had begged of him, thus fulfilling the boon and closing the frame:22

> So, Parvati, that is the place dearest to me, where, in the Kali age, I bestow favors on men. It is the only place of pilgrimage that grants both enjoyment and liberation from bondage. And we, O goddess, made it our residence out of compassion for men. Whatever object men may desire with strong feeling, it is obtained by them there. O

> beautiful goddess, because of your devotion I have spoken out of love, telling you this highest secret.

B. Myth Variants and Additional Stories

In telling the story of Khandoba's battle with the demons, I have, to this point, followed the basic outline of the *Mallari Mahatmya*.For the most part the oral stories follow this outline, elaborating numerous details, but often they add entirely new stories to the central core of the myth.

Further Sanskritization of the Dramatis Personae

One of the most noticeable additions in the oral stories is the tendency to explain all of the elements of the story of the battle with the demons in terms of the Saivite pantheon. Not only is Khandoba the avatar of Siva and Mhalsa the avatar of Parvati, but Hegadi Pradhan, Khandoba's "minister," is explained as an avatar of Visnu, and Banu (or Banai), Khandoba's second wife (who is a Dhangar), is said to be an avatar of Ganga. Moreover, Khandoba's faithful dog, who assists him in his battle against the demons, 23 is regarded as an avatar of Krsna; Krsna's flute is magically changed by Khandoba's *bhandar* into a beautiful girl who becomes the prototype of the Muralis;24 the *langar*,the ritual chain traditionally carried around the neck by many of Khandoba's devotees and broken in certain rituals as a test of the devotee's faith, is regarded as an avatar of Siva's snake (naga); Mani is the avatar of Madhu and Malla of Kaitabha; and the horse, although still thought of as a gift of the conquered and reformed Mani, is also considered an avatar of Nandi.

One Demon or Two

In many of the myth variants preserved at small temples in Maharashtra, the Khandoba story is told with only one demon in the cast of characters. His name is Manimal and he rides a white horse. The story of this composite demon is substantially the same as the story in the two-demon version except that the boons and the requests of the two demons are conflated and compressed. It is usually Malla's final request (that he be given naivedya of his own kind) that is attributed to the composite demon; the horse (sometimes called "Mani") is given to Khandoba before the demon is killed by decapitation; there is no explicit chartering of the "Malhari" name of Khandoba, and the demon is localized in a nearby shrine where goat naivedya is now offered. Where the story is told in this form, the emphasis seems to be on establishing the moral superiority of Khandoba over the demon and chartering a place in the cult where non-vegetarian naivedya can be

offered. Some story tellers explain Manimal as a single horse and rider demon in two parts: Malla being the demon himself who makes the final request to be given goat naivedya and Mani being the horse he is riding.

New Warriors in the Battle: *Mhalsa, Banu, and the Dog*

According to the structure of the written story, Mhalsa, Khandoba's first wife, does not make an appearance until after the demons are both conquered and Khandoba, as a boon to his devotees, agrees to return to Jejuri to remain forever. Banu, Khandoba's second wife, 25 does not appear at all in the *Mallari Mahatmya* and in the oral stories she appears only after Khandoba and Mhalsa have lived at Jejuri for some length of time. There is one very popular story in the cult, however, in which Mhalsa, Banu, the dog, and the horse enter the scene much earlier and play a crucial role in the battle against the demons. One version of the story goes like this.26

When the Lord Siva had declared that he would take the Khandoba avatar to fight the two troublesome demons, Parvati said that she wanted to come too: "You are always taking avatars and leaving me here alone. This time I want to come along." Siva says:

> OK, OK, after I conquer the two demons, we can settle there and live for a while. You can take the avatar of Mhalsa, the daughter of Timaset, the Lingayat grocer. After the battle is over and it is safe, I will come and marry you and bring you to my palace in Jejuri.

At this point Ganga, who, from her place in Siva's hair, had been witnessing the entire episode of the rsis' visit and Siva's reaction, speaks out with stern determination declaring that she wants to come along too.27 Siva responds: "OK, OK, You can take the avatar of a Dhangar (shepherdess) and I will come to your village and marry you, too, and bring you to the palace in Jejuri." Parvati then speaks: "That is all fine,28 but why can't we come with you now. We could surely help in the battle." And Ganga, still clinging bravely to the still shaking locks, adds, "Yes, we could help; we could help; you will need us; you will see."

Siva, however, manfully refuses to accept their help in the battle, and, declaring that this is really man's work, he suddenly grabs hold of his snake, sprinkles some bhandar29 on it which turns it into a langar, wraps the langar around his neck and charges off to assume the Khandoba avatar and do battle with the demons. Here the Vaghya enacts the assumption of the flaming aura of the Khandoba avatar and

the beginning of the fight with the demons. The Vaghya makes it clear from his dramatization that he expects no trouble in conquering the demons without aid from anyone.

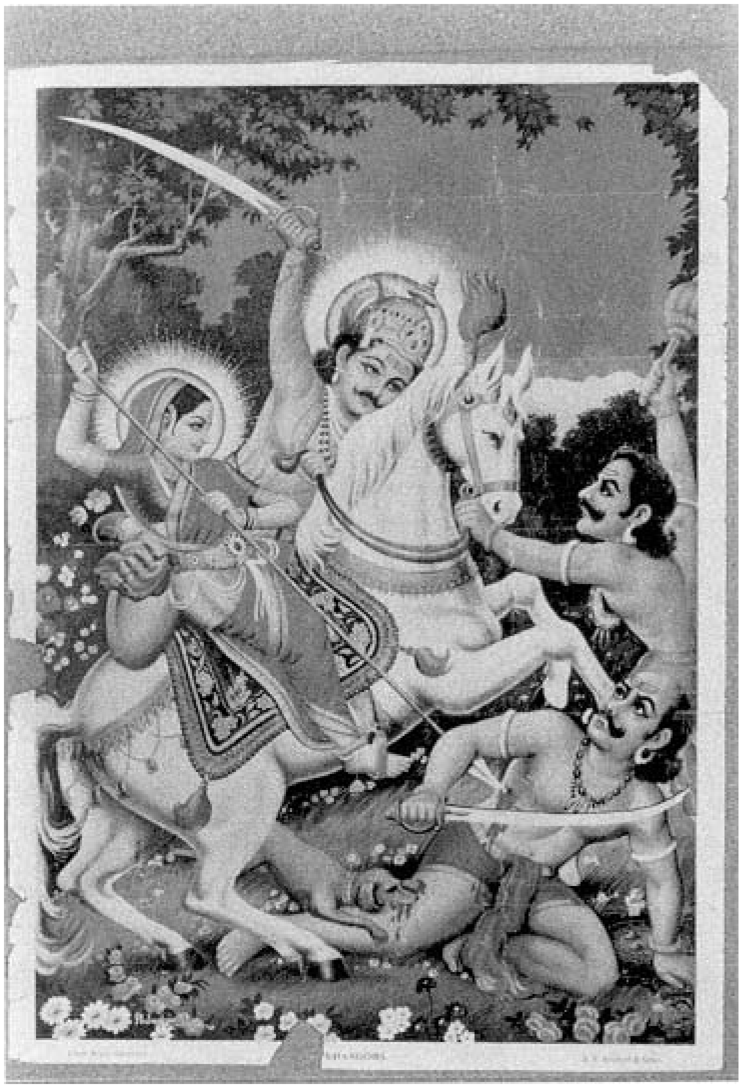
Very early in the battle, however, Mani is wounded and, because he is so young, the drops of his blood create more demons as soon as they touch the ground. 30 Khandoba valiantly tries to slay all of the demons that are springing up from the drops of Mani's blood. The Vaghya acts out the impossible mission of killing the multiplying demons without spilling any more blood. Soon Khandoba realizes that he needs help and he sends for Parvati and Ganga. The two goddesses immediately assume their respective avatars and join the battle, catching the drops of blood from Mani's wounds and from those of all the other blood-generated demons before they fall to the ground.

At first they try to catch the blood in their mouths, but that, the Vaghya indicates through gestures, is a futile attempt; then they use bowls shaped just like the *kotmas*31of the Vaghyas and Muralis, but even this is not enough. The Vaghya at this point acts out the frustration of the two goddesses. They run back and forth shouting: "What to do? What to do? "32 Fortunately, Khandoba's dog has come along with Banu. He sees the problem and immediately begins catching the falling drops of blood in his mouth. The Vaghya sings several verses describing the dog's prowess, each punctuated with the refrain: "This dog catches so much blood; so much blood!" After each refrain, the Vaghya acts out the amazing efficiency of the blood-catching dog, and adds a special, extra hymn of praise for the dog of Khandoba who saves the day.33 And, indeed, in this version this is precisely where the battle turns. When Mani sees that his blood is not regenerating demons, he begins to tire. Khandoba is able finally to wear him down and, catching him in a weakened position, throws a discus-like missile and knocks him unconscious.

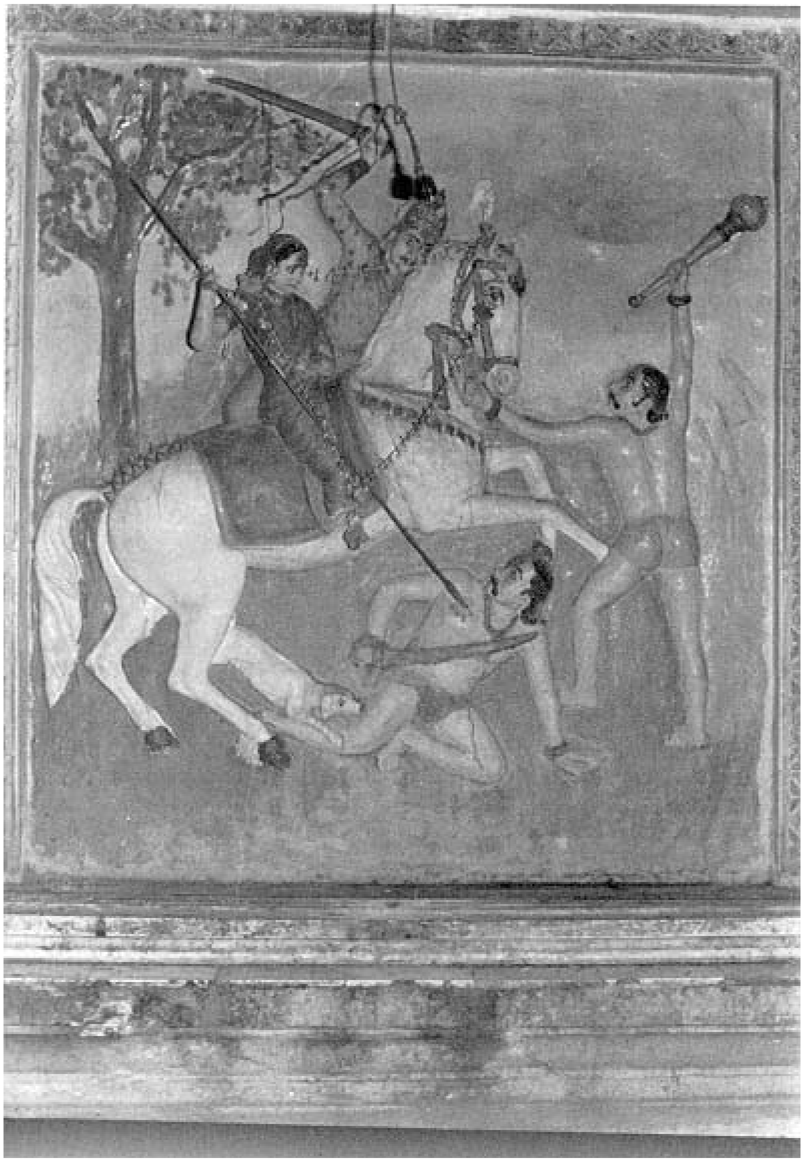
Other variants of the battle story depict Banu, Mhalsa, the dog, and the horse, all assisting Khandoba in the battle in diverse ways. In some Banu uses her bow with its magic arrows. In some Mhalsa or (rarely) Banu is mounted on the horse with Khandoba, fighting the demons with sword or spear. In several versions Khandoba's white horse plays an active role in the attack against the demons, sometimes holding their heads down on the ground while Khandoba approaches to apply a *coup de grace* (see plate 22).34 There is one version of the story that is told, so far as I know, only in picture form (see plates 23 and 24).35 It depicts Mhalsa mounted in front of Khandoba on the white horse, piercing the side of one of the demons with a spear,



22. Khandoba's horse holding the two demons' heads under its front hooves. A folk bronze from northern Karnataka. Photo by John Stanley.



23. Khandoba fighting the two demons with help from Mhalsa, the horse, and the thigh-biting dog. A popular oleograph. Photo by Alf Hiltebeitel.



24. A painted frieze of the same scene as plate 23 in a small Khandoba temple at Medankar Wadi in the village of Chakan, Khed Taluk, Pune District, Maharashtra. Photo by John Stanley.

while the horse strikes at his head with a foreleg and the dog joins the attack burying his teeth in the same demon's right thigh. The other demon is grabbing at the reins of the fighting horse and swinging a war club at Khandoba who is in the process of dismounting and attacking the demon with his sword.

C. Rituals Associated with Mani

Although most of the information about Mani comes in the form of myth, there are two important rituals in the Khandoba cult that are especially focussed on Mani.

Campasasthi

The sixth lunar day (*tithi*)of the bright fortnight of the month of Margasirsa is known throughout the Khandoba cult as Campasasthi. 36 At most temples in the cult this is thought to be the day on which Siva assumed the Khandoba avatar to do battle with the demons. In and around Jejuri, however, Campasasthi is remembered as the day on which Mani surrendered to Khandoba and made the gift of the horse. Some special rituals are performed for Mani. A long cue of

bhaktas forms to do puja and arati to Mani's image in the temple courtyard, the large stone image of Khandoba's horse is covered with yellow turmeric powder (bhandar), and goat sacrifices are made in front of the shrine of Hegadi Pradhan on the hillside below the Khandoba temple. Although puja is performed to the Mani image regularly at Jejuri, this is the only place in the cult and the only time in the ritual calendar of the cult in which special offerings are made to the former demon.

Naivedya: *Who Eats What*?

The second ritual in the cult associated with Mani is the acceptance of non-vegetarian naivedya.37 While at all of the jagrt temples of Khandoba, as well as at many of the smaller ones, the cultic rituals within the temple precincts are strictly vegetarian, many of Khandoba's devotees consider him to be a meat-eater and require some way to offer him naivedya of goat flesh. Others who do not offer meat to Khandoba himself still make a point of offering meat to a demon or a demi-god associated with Khandoba. Hence at all Khandoba ksetras, even the most vehemently vegetarian jagrt temples, there is some provision for the offering of meat. These meat offerings can follow three patterns: a) they may be offered to Khandoba himself *outside* the vegetarian temple precincts; b) they may be offered to Mani or Manimal (or to a

messenger who will carry the naivedya to them) *outside* the temple precincts; or c) they may be offered to Khandoba himself *inside* the temple precincts. Meat offerings are never, to my knowledge, offered to any demon *inside* the temple itself. 38 At Jejuri, where puja is performed to and darsan taken of Mani within the temple courtyard (see plate 25), naivedya is offered to him halfway down the hill in front of an image of Hegadi Pradhan,39 Khandoba's Dhangar brother-in-law (Banu's brother). Hegadi Pradhan then sends the offering on to the demons.40

D. Discussion

The most obvious functions of the story of the capitulation of Mani are to reinforce the etiological charter of Prempur as the premier place of navas-granting, to support the claim of Jejuri to be that place, and to reinforce generally the institution of navas-granting. That is the central purpose of the *Mallari Mahatmya* as is shown by the frame story and the second request of Mani which occurs at (or very near) the structural center of the written myth. It is Mani's second request that is repeated at the end of the frame story to close the frame. Indeed the whole point of Parvati's initial request and of Siva's telling of the story is contained in the content of Mani's second capitulation request. Beyond this, however, there are several important themes to consider.

The Struggle Between Order and Chaos

The story of the defeat of Mani and Malla is essentially a story of the triumph of order over chaos. The two demons threatened the order of the rsis' garden and ashram, not only with physical destruction, but with terrible forms of social and ritual disorder;41 they achieved the power to do that effectively and with impunity through a form of devotional meditation in which they proved to a god the intensity of their devotion. Their misuse of the gift from the god threatens the order of the world itself. Only a special form of another god can set things right. When he sets things right, he does so in a way that establishes a special power at a special place for the granting of wishes from humans who offer devotion to him. Thus, the overcoming by Khandoba of the chaos-producing power of the demons establishes both a place and an institution where the continued overcoming of instances of chaos that threaten human existence can be accomplished.42



25. The image of Mani installed in the courtyard of the temple at Jejuri. Photo by John Stanley.

Degrees of Chaos-Producing Demonality

But the story also indicates that there is more involved in conquering chaos than would first appear. For one thing, according to one possible interpretation, it would seem that there are two degrees of chaos represented by the two different demons. 43Throughout the written version of the story Malla is represented as the more thoroughly demonic of the two brothers. It is Malla who is identified as the demon king. Mani is but one of his many vassals. Even early in the story at the beginning of their destruction of order, Malla is decidedly the more demonic. While both brothers participate fully in the chaos-producing acts, Mani's actions are subordinate to Malla's. Moreover, Mani expresses serious reservations about some of the things they are doing. He tries to convince Malla that some of their actions are so evil that they should refrain from them "lest [their] evil be remembered forever." Malla responds, "How can we not do these acts? It is our nature."

Further, although both brothers are mentioned as objects of Siva's anger following the rsis' report of their actions, it is Malla who is singled out for the fiercest denunciation: "Malla has disturbed me just as a rat who is nearing its end breaks the box containing the dreadful serpent." And it is Malla to whom Siva refers when he declares: "That great wretch, who

has broken to pieces the beautiful cages of the swan-like god Rudra, is on the verge of death."

The starkest example of the different degrees of chaos represented in Mani and Malla, respectively, is seen in a comparison of their "last requests" after they are subdued by Siva. Mani's genuine repentance allows for his reform and transformation into a demigod. His final wish always to be in the presence of Khandoba is genuinely offered and is accepted without irony. Indeed, it results in the establishment of a cult of Mani within the very precincts of Khandoba's temple.44 His request that all humans may receive "treasure . . . etc" is genuinely consonant with the purpose of Khandoba in assuming the avatar. Finally, his wish that Khandoba accept his horse and Khandoba's acceptance of it show how totally Mani's intent has become one with the intent of the conquering god of order. Clearly, Mani's conversion is genuine.

Malla's apparent conversion in the conversion hymn attributed to him is just as clearly not genuine. When, as a result of it, he is offered three final requests, his intransigence, the enormity of his vows of destruction and, most of all, his final request for the bodies of humans as naivedya are in stark contrast to Mani's requests. Malla is unregener-

ately evil and so he must be killeddestroyed, not reformed. He is decapitated and his horned head is placed under the threshold of the temple (see plate 21) where the feet of Khandoba's bhaktas will defile it on the way to their darsan of their god. 45

This interpretation is based on the *Mallari Mahatmya* version of the myth and those oral variants which follow it. In many other oral stories, however, the two demons are not consistently distinguished, and may likewise be portrayed on a par iconographically, as in plate 22, where both demons' heads are trod under the horse's hooves, and at Dhamankel, where Khandoba subdues each of them equally, holding their heads under his knees (see plate 26). Sometimes there is, as we have seen, one composite demon; sometimes the identities of the two are confused. Although it is an important motif in the written version of the myth, the distinction between regenerate and unregenerate evil is deemphasized or non-existent in many other oral stories.

The Necessity to Control a Conquered Demon's Power

Whether one demon or two, whether reformable or unregenerate, demonic power must be controlled as well as conquered. Two types of this control are represented by two separate motifs in the stories: a) the motif of the localization of the power of the conquered demons; and b) the blood motif.

Mani and Malla have generated a great deal of power and energy both, initially, through their devotion to Brahma46 and, subsequently, through violent and chaotic actions they performed as a result of that devotional power. The worldview in which the stories are written seems to assume that that power must be localized and controlled rather than merely destroyed or reformed. The same logic that governs other instances of the release of demonic power, such as the exorcism of a ghost, seems to be operative in the case of the conquering of these demons. The assumption in the case of ghost exorcism, both in the Khandoba cult and generally throughout the Deccan, is that the exorcised ghost's power must be localized. The purpose of the localization is normally controlto keep the ghost's power from possessing someone else. Iron nails are driven into trees, or some other ritual marker is created either at the point of the exorcism or at a point nearby where three roads intersect.47 Sometimes, however, the power of an exorcised ghost is such that it can be not only controlled, but appropriated for help and assistancereformed, in a sense, into a demigod. In the story of Mani and Malla it would seem we have a similar dynamic at work. Malla's power, if we accept the *Mallari Mahatmya* version of the demons'



26. The central image in the Khandoba temple at Dhamankel, Junnar Taluk, Pune District, Maharashtra. The three stone *pindis* in front of the Khandoba image are Khandoba (center), Mhalsa (left), and Banu (right). The female figure to Khandoba's right is Mhalsa; the face peering over his left shoulder may be Banu. The small figure with a sword toward the front and to Khandoba's right is Hegadi Pradhan, here identified as a Dhangar and avatar of Visnu. Photo by John Stanley.

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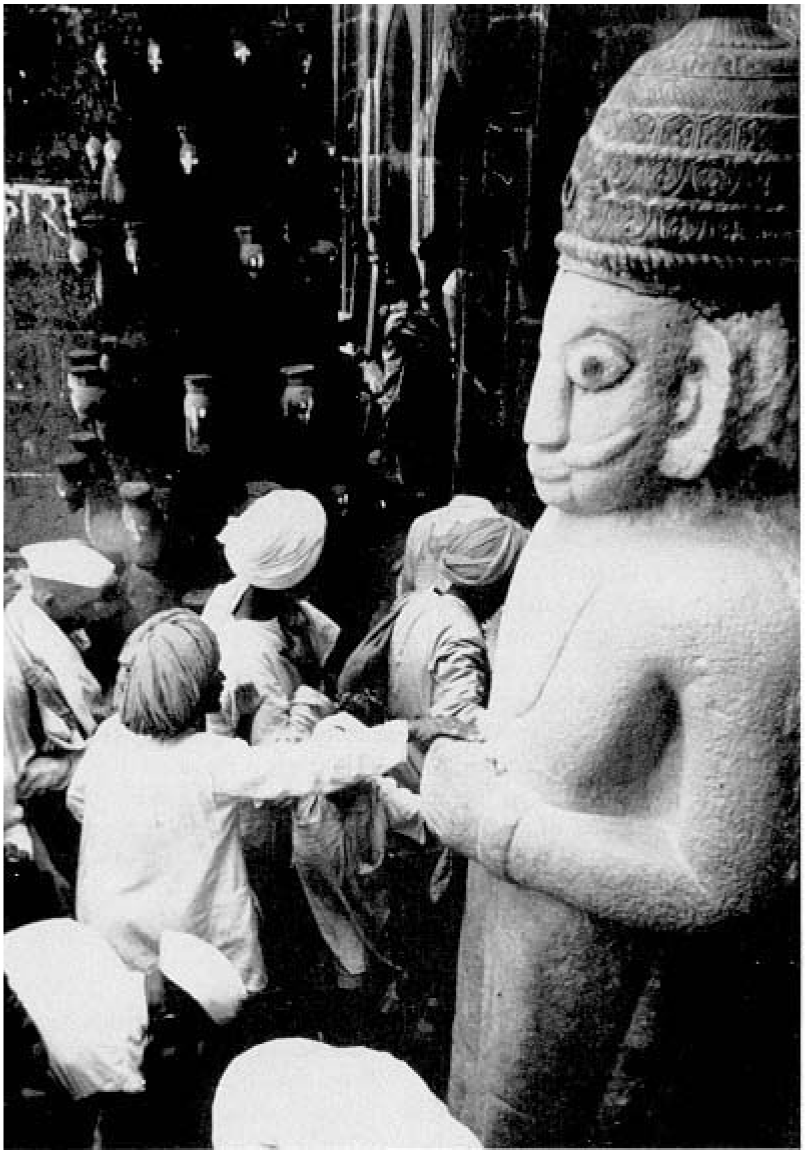
identification, is unregenerately demonic. It must be localized, but the localization is only for purposes of identification and control. Since the localized power will do no one any good, no cult is established to appropriate the power. Still, whatever residual energy may be left of Malla's demonic power must be kept under control. And so it is localized under the threshold of the Khandoba temple where it will be constantly under the feet of his devotees. The power of Mani, however, is another story. His power is reformed before it is localized and its localization is not merely for the purpose of control but for ritual appropriation. He becomes a new demigod, and the marker of his localization (the murti of Mani) is given a place of honor in the cultic precincts of Khandoba's most watchful (jagrt) temple. Puja to this murti is regularly offered and various other rituals for the appropriation of its power are routinized (see plate 27).

The blood-drop motif provides an even more interesting example of the need to contain the conquered power of a demon. So long as his blood is uncontained, Mani's power for the production of chaos is infinite, but once the regenerating power of the blood can be contained, he can be subdued, reformed, and localized. The stories giving both Mhalsa and Banu the very important roles of "closing off of the infinite process" 48 of Mani's power add to their prestige

in the cult. But most important of all in this respect is the role ascribed to Khandoba's dog. Dogs are normally considered unclean in Hindu thought, but they are special to Khandoba, and giving the dog a special role in the defeat of the demons both charters the special place that dogs have in the cult49 and provides a mythic libretto for one of the very important cultic rituals of the Vaghyas, the imitation of the dog at a number of the established festivals in the cult.50

Naivedya

At several points in its development groups of meat eaters have been assimilated into the Khandoba cult. Some of these were Untouchable castes, such as Mahars and Mangs; some were nomads, such as Dhangars. As I have shown earlier, at virtually all Khandoba ksetras there is some provision for offering meat, either to Khandoba, himself, or to one or both of the demons he conquers. At temples where most of the devotees are meat-eating, there is no problem, as it is assumed that Khandoba himself accepts meat naivedya and, therefore, goats are slaughtered and offered to Khandoba within the precincts of the temple itself. At most Khandoba temples, however, and certainly at all of those considered really jagrt, vegetarian naivedya is the only thinkable



27. Bhaktas taking darsan of Mani in the courtyard of the Jejuri Khandoba temple. Photo by John Stanley.

offering to the god. 51 At these temples especially one of the important functions of the story of Malla's last request is to charter the place of a meat-eating godling associated with Khandoba at a location nearby, but distinct from, a Khandoba temple precinct. Where this is the principal function of the story, it does not seem to matter whether the demon who gets the goat naivedya is Mani or Malla or the composite demon, Manimal. Where, as at Jejuri, the demon is so closely associated with Khandoba as to have his image permanently established in the temple precincts, the meat-eating aspect of the reformed demon is omitted or deemphasized.

E. Conclusion

The story of Khandoba descending to earth to destroy two troublesome demons is a local instance of a widely known Hindu myth. At the central core of one particular variant of that story, noteworthy both for its popularity and the high literary quality of its principal written version, is the account of the capitulation and conversion of one of the demons and the decapitation and disposal of the other. The converted demon's name is Mani. The story charters a temple in the city of Prempur on Mount Manical as the best and most effective place in all the world for the granting of navas to Khandoba's bhaktas. Different aspects of the myth are variously emphasized in the oral versions of the story, including the easy accessibility to Khandoba of all castes and groups, the chartering of various devotional rituals associated with the overcoming of chaos, the distinction (relatively non-invidious) between meat-eating and vegetarian followers of the god, and the establishment of an acceptable place and method for the offering of meat naivedya in the cult.

Notes

1. *Khandoba* is by far the most popular name of this deity, although he is also known as Mhalsakant and Khanderav in Marathi, as Malhari and Mailar (in both Marathi and Kannada), and as Mallanna (in Kannada and Telugu); see Sontheimer in this volume. In addition there are striking parallels to Jyotiba, Kedarnath, Mhaskoba, Bhairoba, and Aiyappan (all horse riding non-Brahman deities), although he is not identified with them.

2. The research for this paper was made possible by grants from the American Institute of Indian Studies and Lawrence University.

3. Interestingly, Jejuri is the only temple to have an image of one of the demons within the Khandoba temple itself.

4. Vaghyas are special ritual functionaries in the cult having the responsibility of begging alms for the god and, along with Muralis (their female counterparts), singing and dancing in his honor. The ritual functions at which Vaghyas and Muralis sing (especially the all night songfests known as *jagrans*)are the source of many of the stories in the cult.

5. The Marathi version by Siddhapal Kesasri is by far the most popular and has gained a special status in the cult. Most printed versions of the Khandoba story are based on this version. Günther Sontheimer is concerned to deemphasize Khandoba's Sanskritic and Brahmanical associations. He rightly points out in his "Rudra and Khandoba: Continuity in Folk Religion," in M. Israel and N. K. Wagle, eds., *Religion and Society in Maharashtra*: *South Asian Studies Papers No*. *I* (Toronto: Center for South Asian Studies, University of Toronto, Coach House Press, 1987, 1-31) that when told in the context of the folk religious narratives, the *Mallari Mahatmya* myth is de-Brahmanized and made to fit the context of folk religion, but his claim that "the content of the Mahatmya is still hardly known to the majority of the devotees" does not correspond with my field observations. Indeed, I found both the content and the structure of the *Mallari Mahatmya* (including the frame story) to be widely known and popular in the folk traditions I observed.

6. A *navas* is a vow made to Khandoba to perform some service or extraordinary feat for him as a sign of the intensity of one's devotion, in return for which he grants a request or boon. The requests, in contemporary cult practice, are usually simple and specific (e.g., good crops, male children, victory in a wrestling match, success in an upcoming business deal, etc.), although sometimes more general (e.g., happiness, success, long life, etc.). The vows are usually to perform some simple cultic ritual (e.g., to make a pilgrimage, sacrifice a goat, make puja a certain number of times, etc.). In the recent past more extreme vows [e.g., dedication of a child to the life-long service of Khandoba or vows to perform extraordinary feats of strength or endurance of pain (including hook-swinging and firewalking)] were common at all of

the jagrt ksetras of Khandoba. Rivalry grew up both within the Khandoba cult and with other cult centers about which temple was the best place for navas granting. See John M. Stanley, "Special Time, Special Power: The Fluidity of Power in a Popular Hindu Festival," *Journal of Asian Studies* 36 (1977), p. 31, n. 31. It is no accident that all the ksetras that claim to be Prempur are known as places for navas-granting.

7. *Tapas* here is the devotional energy, usually conceived of as heat, created by especially intense devotional procedures.

8. In the *Mallari Mahatmya* and in most of the oral stories Ghrtamari's anger and vow seem focused especially on Malla. See below.

9. This is the only mention of the dogs in the *Mallari Mahatmya*,but dogs become increasingly important in the oral stories. See below.

10. It is especially noteworthy that in the *Mallari Mahatmya* Nandi is not replaced by the horse until after the capitulation of Mani. The oral stories, however, have Khandoba mounted on a horse from the beginning of the battleoften with Mhalsa mounted behind him assisting in the combat. The name Martand Bhairav is used consistently throughout the *Mallari Mahatmya* from this point forward, but the oral stories nearly always use the name of Khandoba or one of his other vernacular names.

11. The later oral stories will number this army anywhere from two-hundred thousand to ten billion. The numbers are nearly always even.

12. Both in the written forms and the oral forms of the story, etiologies such as this abound.

13. In some of the versions this is taken to mean that his head should always be under Khandoba's foot. In Jejuri this is assumed to be the charter of the presence of the image of Mani in the temple courtyard.

14. This wish-granting story is actually a three-part charter myth. The granting of the first wish provides the charter of the special navas granting power of the Prempur temple on Mount Manical. Indeed the same formula will be used again in the close of the frame story. The granting of the second request charters the presence of Mani's image in the temple courtyard, and the granting of the third wish charters the horse as Khandoba's vehicle.

15. The fierceness of this vow is intended, as is the enormity of Malla's final request, as an indication of a deeper degree of demonality on the part of Malla. It is clear from this point on that Malla will remain unreformed and unreformable.

16. The last request does not appear in the *Mallari Mahatmya*,but it is an important motif in most Vaghyas' renditions of the story. The number of humans that Malla asks for varies from five-hundred to ten million. Whatever the number, the point is that Malla is totally unrepentant and will keep devouring humans as long as he can.

17. This is told as an etiology of the carved stone heads of horned demons found on the thresholds of several Khandoba temples. In Jejuri such a head is said by my informants to be the head of Malla, although Günther Sontheimer reports being told it was the head of Daksa. See Günther D. Sontheimer, "The Mallari/Khandoba Myth As Reflected in Folk Art and Ritual," *Anthropos* 79 (1984), p. 160, n. 15.

18. Campasasthi or Campa's sixth; see below at n 36. This day is also identified in the cult as the day on which Mani surrenders to Khandoba and gives him the horse.

19. The lingam is a common popular representation of Khandoba. Early in the cult, before heavy Sanskritization, these representations were called pindi, and both male and female forms were the samea rounded protrusion of stone that seemed to thrust itself out of the earth. After these representations of the god were identified as lingams of Siva, a distinction was drawn in the cult

between created lingams and self-revealed ones. A svayambhu lingam is, thus, a self-revealed manifestation of Siva. No human hands carved it. Siva, himself, in this case in his form of Khandoba, thrust forth a manifestation of himself.

20. Thus chartering several of the cult's important festivals and rituals.

21. *Mallari Mahatmya* XXI:11.

22. *Mallari Mahatmya*:XXII:34-38. Not only is this frame an important part of the structure of the *Mallari Mahatmya*,it is often employed by Vaghyas and other cultic story tellers in their telling, singing, or dramatizing individual episodes of the myth.

23. See plates 23 and 24.

24. Muralis are the female counterparts of Vaghyas. They are dedicated as children to Khandoba and are considered his brides. See above, n. 5.

25. In the southern cult Banu is not regarded as a proper wife of Khandoba, but a concubine. In fact the Banu stories are for the most part a chartering of the gradual acceptance of Dhangars into the cult. They abound with motifs of rivalry between Banu and Mhalsa and Banu's clever perseverance in finally winning a full-fledged place in Khandoba's household.

26. In the following account I have tried to preserve the dramatic structure of the Vaghya's account. It was a story that he had often sung in a more elaborate setting with other Vaghyas and Muralis playing out the various roles. In this single narrative version he assumed several roles himself, acting them out with a great sense of timing and dramatic skill.

27. The Vaghya acts out the great difficulty Ganga has had holding on to Siva's flying hair during his fiercest anger. She is fatigued and frightened by her ordeal, but speaks determinedly. Indeed this determination becomes a character trait of Banu in all of the later stories in which she and Mhalsa are rivals.

28. In many other stories Parvati doesn't think it is fine at all. Indeed, the rivalry between Mhalsa and Banu that is so important an element in most of the stories usually begins already in the frame story with rivalry between Parvati and Ganga, but, in this version, Mhalsa and Banu are virtually friends.

29. *Bhandar* (turmeric) is Khandoba's special ritual powder. It is used in many rituals in the cult and in many of the oral stories the sprinkling of it accounts for Khandoba's magic powers. In a strict sense mention of the bhandar is anachronistic at this point in the story since Siva's powder is white ash.

30. In this version the Vaghya makes clear that Malla's blood did not work in this same way. The explanation, confirmed later in an interview, was that Mani's blood had this power because he was the younger brother.

31. *Kotma* is the village Marathi word for *kotamba*,the square-shaped brass or wooden begging bowl carried traditionally by Vaghyas and Muralis in which they beg alms for Khandoba.

32. In one version, when Khandoba realizes there is too much blood for

Mhalsa and Banu to catch it all in their kotmas, he sprinkles bhandar on the two goddesses and changes them into swarms of ants in which form they suck up all of the spilled blood from the ground. This is one of several stories where stinging and biting insects provide aid to Khandoba or his devotees.

33. The Vaghya especially enjoys this part of his story. He plays the role of the clever, dashing dog with gusto, running to and fro to catch the spattered drops of blood of many young demons, thus saving the day for Khandoba. Vaghyas believe that they are descended from Khandoba's dog. They have a special affinity for dogs and often play the roles of dogs in festivals. In some of the festivals, especially in the southern cult, they will spend the festival day on all fours, barking and growling their devotion to Khandoba. Vaghyas also have a special relationship with tigers. See John M. Stanley, "Nishkama and Sakama Bhakti: Pandharpur and Jejuri," in M. Israel and N. K. Wagle, eds., *Religion and Society in*

Maharashtra (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1987), and Alf Hiltebeitel, "Animals and Humans in Hindu Mythology and Ritual: Some Popular Bhakti Examples," paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C. 1984.

34. Several folk bronzes illustrate this moment in the story. See plate 22. Compare the folk bronze published in Sontheimer, "Mallari/Khandoba Myth," Fig. 3.

35. Story tellers in the Khandoba cult do not regard this picture as authentic. I have shown this picture to many story tellers asking them to tell me the story of the picture only to receive a disparaging response: No, that is only a picture; Mhalsa was not even in the battle; or Mhalsa was, but the dog was not; or the dog was in the battle, but only to catch blood. Still, the picture remains the most popular depiction of the battle with the demons, indeed one of the most popular of all depictions of Khandoba in the cult. Reproductions of it are sold in temple towns all over Maharashtra, and in many small temples (e.g., Medankar Wadi, Chakan Taluk, Pune District; see plate 24) there is a reproduction of this picture in the temple itself. For many Khandoba bhaktas this depiction is the principal vehicle of the story of the battle, whatever the story tellers think about its accuracy. In some temples the self-wounding of a bhakta's thigh is mentioned along with hook swinging and the piercing of the foot between the ankle and the Achilles tendon as extreme rites of devotion (*bagad*).When the thigh is wounded in this ritual, the blood is allowed to drip onto the pindi and the ritual is referred to as "self-sacrifice."

36. Campa's sixth, so named after an especially devout Dhangar bhakta of Khandoba called Campa who could not afford to offer sweet cakes (*puran poli*)as naivedya to her Lord, but offered instead some of her own cooked food, an onion and eggplant *roti* called *bharit rodga*.Puran poll is generally identified as a Brahman offering. Bharit rodga is a rural dish associated especially with Dhangars. Khandoba's acceptance of the poorer offering charters his special approachability to Dhangars. Günther Sontheimer insists that the Campasasthi festival at Jejuri is part of the "Brahmanized" cult and therefore not to be taken

seriously. His argument is based on the association of the *sasthi* tithi with Skanda and the association of Skanda with Brahmans ("Rudra and Khandoba," n. 8). He is correct in his rejection of the mythological association of Khandoba with Skanda, but he overlooks other important non-Brahman and non-Skanda associations with the sasthi tithiincluding the Campa legend and the idea clearly fixed in the cult that this was the day of Mani's capitulation.

37. Compare Madeleine Biardeau's treatment of vegetarian and meat-eating gods in this volume.

38. Puja and arati are performed to Mani within the temple precincts at Jejuri, but non-vegetarian naivedya is never offered.

39. Hegadi means "brother-in-law." Pradhan means "minister." Hegadi Pradhan is the brother-in-law minister of Khandoba. There are two Hegadi Pradhans in the Khandoba cult: one is a *vani* (a Lingayat merchant caste); he is the brother of Mhalsa. The other is a Dhangar; he is the brother of Banubai. At some temples there are shrines to both Hegadi Pradhans, but usually there is only one. Even at temples where there is only one shrine, it is sometimes identified as the Dhangar Pradhan by some informants and the Lingayat Pradhan by others. Both are, by some informants, said to be the avatar of Visnu. At Jejuri it is the Dhangar minister who receives the naivedya and carries it to the demon.

40. There is considerable confusion about which demon gets the naivedya and precisely how it is taken to him. Some informants at this shrine claim the offering goes to Mani only. Some say it goes to both demons and some insist that it goes to the composite demon Manimal. The logic of the story would seem to require that Malla should receive at least some of the goat naivedya; otherwise the irony of Malla's being given the head of a goat doesn't work. Some bhaktas at this shrine insist that Malla was killed and cannot receive naivedya at all, but Mani receives it because of his genuine conversion and the gift of the horse.

41. E.g., the rape of the rsis' wives and the throwing of the dead bodies into the wells.

42. For a treatment of navas-granting as an instance of overcoming chaos, see Stanley, "Special Time, Special Power" and "Nishkama and Sakama Bhakti."

43. The composite demon in many of the oral versions loses much of this distinction.

44. Identification of this murti is not unequivocal. In his "Mallari/Khandoba Myth," pp. 158-59, Sontheimer identifies the murti as Malla, although he notes some confusion and points out that it is sometimes identified as "Mani, the Malla" or even Mani. In my experience informants consistently identified the image as Mani or occasionally as Manimal, but never as Malla nor "Mani, the Malla."

45. See above, n. 17.

46. In the oral stories the god to whom they do the initial devotion is usually

Siva himself rather than Brahma. Indeed, in the most popular depictions of the demons they are wearing Rudraksa beads indicative of bhaktas of Siva.

47. See John M. Stanley, "Gods, Ghosts and Possession" in E. Zelliot and M. Bernsten, eds., *The Experience of Hinduism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, in press).

48. I am grateful for this insight to Wendy O'Flaherty's commentary to the original presentation of this paper.

49. Dogs have important ritual functions at all Khandoba festivals where they are ritually covered with bhandar and become an object from which a devotee can take Khandoba's darsan.

50. The Vaghyas canine rituals were well-known, not only in the Khandoba cult, but throughout the Deccan, as early as the seventeenth century. The Vithoba devotee and poet-saint Tukaram writes one of his most famous abhanghas in the persona of a Vaghya, barking out his devotion to Khandoba. See Stanley, "Nishkama and Sakama Bhakti."

51. Some informants were especially vehement about this, striking the ground with a stick and spitting to emphasize the distastefulness of the idea that Khandoba would ever receive non-vegetarian naivedya. One informant, when told of temples where Khandoba did accept goat meat, was openly disgusted at the idea and insisted that if a god did eat meat at the temples I was telling him about, that god could not possibly be Khandoba.

11
Between Ghost and God: A Folk Deity of the Deccan

Günther D. Sontheimer

Abbreviations:

AV=Atharva Veda, *BSS=Baudhayana Srautasutra*,Ka.=Kannada,
M.Mah.=*Mallari Mahatmya* (Skt.), Ma.=Marathi,
MMKh=Mallanna/Mailara/Khandoba, *MV=Martanda Vijaya* (*Ma*.,1821),
Tel.=Telugu, *TB=Taittiriya Brahmana*, *TS=Taittiriya Samhita*,
VS= Vajasaneyi Samhita.

A. Introduction: Spread and Antiquity

One of the most famous folk gods of Andhra Pradesh is Mallanna often identified with Mallikarjuna of Srisailam in the Kurnool district. 1 Srisailam, in the Nallamala Hills of the Eastern Ghats, was nearly inaccessible until recently. The ancient cult of Mallikarjuna also attracted pilgrims from Maharashtra from at least the twelfth century onwards. They called the god Sirigiri Mallaya, a name still used in Karnataka, Andhra, and Maharashtra.2 Many religious currents have

met in the cult of Mallikarjuna, especially those of Saivite "sects," beginning from the Pasupatas and Kapalikas to the Lingayats, and it also has its epic and puranic contacts.3 As is so often the case with famous cults, forest tribals (Ceficus) and/or pastoralists (Gollas) are said to have been the discoverers of Mallikarjuna. The immediate access to worshippers of all castes and religious affiliations is not only characteristic of Mallanna/Mallikarjuna but also of the god Mailara of Karnataka, and Khandoba alias Mallari/Malhari/Mairal of Maharashtra. Scholars usually compare these three deities, whose interregional

identity is confirmed by itinerant devotees and medieval literature. The identification is explicit in border areas of the three adjoining states, e.g., in Pember/Prempur (Khanapur), near Bidar, at the border of Maharashtra and Karnataka. Here Mallanna is also known as Mailara as well as Khandoba. Such is also the case at Warangal in the Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh, where Katta Mallanna is called Khanderaya. A folk song from Malegaon, further north of Pember, in the Nanded district of Maharashtra, identifies Khandoba with Mallanna:

> On the stony heath of Malegaon
> surrounded by four bastions
> there Malhari resides
> the god Mallanna . . . 4

We are dealing here primarily with the folk deity Mallanna/Mailara/ Khandoba (MMKh) rather than with the sectarian or the puranic Siva. Folk religion has its own identity and may not necessarily subordinate itself to the values of the Brahman. Moreover, other hierarchical models may exist beside that of the Brahman, as Richard Burghart has argued.5 According to him, there is the Brahman, the ascetic, and the king, each claiming highest rank and godhood within their respective hierarchy. The hierarchies do not face each other as rigid structures, but interact. Elements of each heirarchy are incorporated into the other hierarchical model. The highest ranking person of the other hierarchy was assigned an honourable, but subordinated rank within the enlarged model. Similarly I would like to suggest that the cult of MMKh, though borrowing values from the other traditions, is expressive of an autonomous current, that is, folk religion, which interacts with other currents, but is not necessarily subordinated to them. Ecology certainly also plays a role. MMKh are mainly worshipped in dry or (now diminished) forested areas of the Deccan. The devotees belong to a wide range of groups which are known by different names in the three states, but follow the same traditional occupations. Prominent among them are the traditional agricultural, trading, pastoral nomadic, hunting, and predatory castes. Many of these castes had martial proclivities in the past. Devotees include Untouchable castes as well as Brahmans. In Maharashtra it is mainly Desastha Brahmans who worship Khandoba as their family deity. This link with the Brahmans might tempt us to label MMKh as the usual Bhairava who is connected with Brahmanicide and the destruction of the yajña (as in the case of Daksa's sacrifice). But the link to the Brahmanical ritual-social order of the world, as

formulated in terms of the *caturvarnya* system, is generally not emphasized. No doubt this is also a theme, but it is introduced by Brahmanical sources, like the Sanskrit *Mallari Mahatmya* which I briefly deal with at the end of this essay. Considering the transgression of the sacred, social order, we come to learn that MMKh transgress more orders than that of the Brahmans, e.g., that of the Lingayats and the Muslims. In short, the mythological, ritual, historical, social, and ecological context of the cult does not permit us to emphasize *a priori* the importance of the *varna* hierarchy, the Brahmanical value of ritual purity, or the Brahman's spiritual superiority (in Dumont's terms) over worldly power (*ksatram*).Often MMKh resemble a bandit, or a rising, preimperial king rather than a pacified ksetrapala and protector of the caturvarnya system, of Brahmans and cows. They convert and accumulate their devotees from many groups by means of aggression, robbery, love marriage or marriage by capture (apparently in the inverted *pratiloma* order), feats of prowess, tricks, and miracles. They create their order of society not primarily by seeking sanction in the Brahmanical order and becoming a ksetrapala or a "demon devotee." Hierarchy is determined by bhakti (which does not necessarily correspond to the "classical" modes of bhakti) and tapas. From the point of view of sects and the Brahman's point of view the deity may be considered to be just a bhuta, or an inferior godling, that is, a *ksudradevata* or ksetrapala. But for the actual worshippers he is *central to their life and beliefs*,irrespective of how others choose to call their deity.

Folk religion seems to be singularly conservative and there are striking continuities between MMKh and their antecedent Rudra. Rudra was primarily a god of certain groups mentioned, e.g., in the *Satarudriya* of the *Taittirya Samhita*.Their culture was outside, though interconnected with that of the Vedic sacrificial priests who subordinated Rudra as Agni in the agnicayana ritual. For the latter he may have been a "demonic" intruder connected with impurity and death which had to be eliminated. Vedic passages reflect a god who is earthbound, "demonic," with magic powers, potentially ubiquitous in nature, yet very much bearing personal characteristics. These would usually suggest iconic worship, but if we take texts like the *Satarudriya* literally we must conclude that Rudra's followers viewed him as the "charismatic" living leader of their respective group. He is the mediator between the divine unmanifest, untamed elements of *nature*,which he incorporates and controls, and his followers who worship him. But the borders are fluid and all three partake of each other. The follower imitates his leader, the leader, in turn, imitates Rudra in dress and ritual. Here we

find the early roots of bhakti, the root of which is *bhaj* ="to participate." Rudra is called *sthapati* (*TS* 4.5.2.i.) which may refer to a chieftain or to the leader of the Vratyas, 6 *mantri* (*TS* 4.5.2.k)the lord of the "spells"; *senani* (*TS* 4.5.2.a)the leader of the army; *vanij* (*TS* 4.5.2.k.)the merchant; and *daivya bhisaj* (*TS* 4.5.f.)the divine doctor. Rudra is connected with robbers and thieves, heroes and warriors, lords of horses, and dog keepers. Horses, dogs, and cattle are his animals, and he often manifests himself in these animals. He is a hunter with bow and arrow and is associated with forests and mountains. He is the lord of the fields, that is, a ksetrapati (*TS* 4.5.2.g.) rather than a mere "protector" (ksetrapala). All these features survive and are reflected in the MMKh cult. For example, Mallanna is said to be "indistinguishable among bandits" (Tel. *dongallo dorakadu*)in Golla traditions7 and Khandoba is reputed to be "close to thieves"8 and is associated with ex-predatory communities like the Ramosis (Berads). Most noteworthy are the special followers of Rudra, the Vratyas, whose dress and rituals closely resemble the special devotees, the Voggus of Andhra, the Vaghyas of Maharashtra, and in particular the Vaggayyas of Karnataka. That the Vaggayyas actually envisage an *imitatio dei* is demonstrated in the Mailara temple of Aduru in the Dharwar district. Here the typical long woolen black gown of a Vaggayya is displayed on the wall inside the shrine and it is said to be the gown of Mailara. The imitation of the human leader who incorporated the divine and himself became Rudra, e.g., the Ekavratya in his cosmogonic ritual (*AV* XV), seems to have been a common feature before manifestations of the divine in murtis became popular (but cp. *TS 4.5.6.c*:"to him of the amulet"). We need not view the later sects worshipping Siva or Bhairava with their peculiar rituals of *imitatio dei* as the antecedents of the Voggus, etc., but would rather suggest direct continuity between the ancient Vratyas and the present day Voggus, etc. Parallels of such impersonations of the deity also include the devotee of the early Murukan, the *velan* dancing in a frenzy until he became Velan, that is Murukan himself.9 Similarly the *devrsi* ("shaman") in the Khandoba cult is possessed by the god in the form of the wind and virtually becomes Khandoba. The Svami at Mailar (Hadagalli Taluka, Ballari District) impersonates Mailara in the form of a king. In the traditions of the Gollas Mallanna/Mallikarjuna may turn up as a Jangama, a Lingayat renouncer, a "walking linga," as it were, to test his bhaktas. And in the cult of Khandoba the god may turn into a Vaghya for the same purpose.

B. Manifestations of the Folk Deity

The Living God on Earth, God as King and Other Appearances

For the devotee MMKh is a living powerful god (e.g., Ma. jagrt) who exists "here and now" on earth and is not confined to a puranic heaven. He is worshipped in a temple primarily in the form of a svayambhu linga (Ma. *pinda*)which has to be distinguished from the linga installed in the usual Siva temple where the linga has to be enlivened by Brahmans in the ceremony of *pranapratistha*.Accordingly the temple priests of Mallanna are not Brahmans, but Gollas (at Warangal Yerru Gollas) or Lingayats, and in the case of Khandoba Guravs rather than Brahmans. In addition to the linga there are usually brass murtis of the gods. In the case of Mallanna the murtis are four feet high (e.g., in Komarelli, Jangaon Tk., Warangal Dt., in Warangal: Katha Mallanna, and Ailoni/lloni/Inoli, near Warangal) and made of clay (see plates 28 and 29). Mailara's murti at Mailar is also made from the clay of a termite mound. It is from this mound, filled with dreadful serpents, that the god is said to have appeared for the first time. Possession, firewalking, hook-swinging, and animal sacrifices are still practised and point to a folk deity *par excellence*.It is only in recent times that such customs recede, except in outlying areas. MMKh are worshiped by different groups as their leader, reflecting their respective occupations.

But they are especially worshiped like a royal god, or like a god as a king, and as such the god of dynasties and would-be dynasties of kings. For instance Mallanna was the *kulasvami of* the Kakatiya (thirteenth century), Mailara of a chief of Bhujanganagar (fourteenth century), Khandoba/ Khanderaya was the family deity of the Holkars and the Gaikwads (eighteenth century), and so on. It was especially in Karnataka and Maharashtra that the royal and martial aspects of the cult flourished. The temples of Khandoba often resemble fortresses, as, e.g., in Jejuri (Pune District) which is said to be his capital (Ma. *rajdhani*;see plate 30). The brass murtis, often donated by kings, resemble kings. They reflect the historical period of the Vijayanagara empire and, in the case of Khandoba, they resemble, when dressed, a Maratha Sardar. The face of Mallanna is usually adorned by a Muslim beard. Representations on silver plaques used as house gods or as amulets and brass murtis show him seated on a horse accompanied by his wife or Sakti. His weapons show the martial and sacrificial background of the cult: trident (trisul)



28. Images of Mallanna, Golla Ketamma (left), and Balaji Madaladevi at Kommarelli, Jangaon Taluk, Warangal District, Andhra Pradesh. Contemporary lithograph. Photo by Günther Sontheimer.



29. Images of Mallanna and his wives in the temple of Ailoni, near Warangal. Contemporary lithograph. Photo by Günther Sontheimer.



30. The Khandoba temple on the Gadkot ("Hill Fort") at Jejuri. The temple in the so-called Peshva style was recently renovated in the Tamil style. Photo by Günther Sontheimer.

and hourglass-shaped drum (damaru), sword (*khadga*)and shield (Ma. *dhal*)or a bowl (Skt. *patra*,Ma. *paral*).

MMKh are also treated like a king and act like a king. At Jejuri Khandoba is carried in a palanquin for a hunting expedition on Somvati Amavasya, that is, on a no moon day falling on a Monday. The procession moves from the Gadkot (Hill-Fort) to the river where the god takes a bath with his devotees after his hunt. The ritual is reminiscent of the asvamedha: Khandoba's horse is led by a Muslim far ahead of the palanquin. The devotees (e.g., the Dhangar shepherds acting as hunters with spears) eagerly try to touch the hoofs or the head of the horse and walk with it. The "hunt" concludes with a common bath of the god and all the participants. At the end of the Vedic sacrifice the king takes a final bath (avabhrtha). His followers join him and become free of sin. 10 In the old (nineteenth century) songs of the Vaghyas (bards of the god), the hunt to the river Karha is mentioned as well as Khandoba's circling the earth on a horse.11 In the *VS* (23, 17-19) the sacrificial horse is identified with Agni, Vayu, and Surya. According to the *Satapatha-Brahmana* (13, 2, 7, 13-15) the mantra says that the victim will conquer the same realms as these deities. Agni, Vayu, and Surya are forms of Rudra, the war god. Khandoba is similarly identified with fire, such as the indispensable torches (Ma. *divti*,Ka. *divati*),or the flame that is worshipped on a platter. He is the sun as Martanda Bhairava, and in the form of turmeric powder (Ma. *bhandar*,Ka. *bandara*,Tel. *bandaru*).MMKh's special day is Sunday. But he is also the wind (Ma. *varem*)who possesses devotees and makes them act like horses. Horse and dog are associated with Rudra as well as MMKh. Dogs (preferably black) are worshiped throughout the cult of MMKh. The elementary, undomesticated manifestation of the divine in the form of an as yet wild dog is still experienced by the Kois, who belong to the Gonds. They revere wild dogs even if they kill cattle.12 A similar concession is made to Rudra, whose connection with the dog is close, as for instance in a passage from the *BSS* (14.23; *TB* 2.4.1.6.): If a dog passes between the *garhapatya* and *ahavaniya* fire, impurity is removed by making a cow walk over it, and the sacrificer hands over his cattle to Rudra (who is Agni). Unlike those made over to Rudra (*TS* 2.1.7), cows are, of course, not sacrificed to MMKh, although sheep used to be sacrificed to him and were slaughtered by Khandoba, according to oral traditions, such as when he destroys the herd of sheep of Banai, his second wife. Mallanna's army consists of seven dogs, a number which may easily increase: King Martanda has 700 dogs, and sometimes they amount to seven crores (*yelkoti* = Tel., Ka., but the term is also very

much used in the Khandoba cult). The horse or the dog may appear in the dream of the devotee and summon him to Jejuri. For those who are not worshippers of MMKh the dog may spell death and disaster. Khandoba may take the form of a dog and punish those who insult his bhaktas. But the god also grants freedom from the state of a wild animal and the present day Vaghyas, the special devotees of Khandoba, are examples of this: they were actually tigers, but gained their human form, or rather turned into the faithful dogs of the god by having the vision of the god. 13 The dog and also the humans impersonating it are epitomes of faithfulness and protection. The dog is useful to the hunter and the shepherd; hunting and protecting are characteristic activities of the king. Thus there are famous examples of Maratha kings and Sardars which show much loyalty and affection between masters and their faithful dogs. In this light it may not sound so ridiculous that King Sahu (1707-49) would dress and treat the dog that had saved him from a tiger as a Sardar,14 or that Malharrao Holkar would not dine with the Pesva unless his dog was admitted to the dining hall. He would rather eat with his dog outside on the verandah.15 We should add that Sahu as well as Holkar were devotees of Khandoba. The same reverence for dogs prevails in the Mallanna cult. When Mallanna and his brother Bayanna sleep during the night, the dogs keep watch (Tel. *kavali*)for wolves, jackals, and tigers. When Mallanna distributes the milk of sheep, he makes twelve leaf cups: seven for the seven dogs, one for the goddess Posamma, one for Agni, one for Nagasarpam, one for Bayanna, and one for himself. There may be a thirteenth cup for the wind god. It goes floating in the air and Mallanna tells Bayanna that the wind god is carrying away his cup.16

The Life-Increasing God

MMKh accept promises and fulfil wishes (Ma. *navas*,Ka. *harike*,Tel. *mokkubadi* =vow). Such wishes may be earthbound like victory in battle, children, rain, good harvest, cattle, recovery from illness, and good marriages. Especially fertility and marriage are important incidents. The marriage has to be sanctioned by the god and the couple has to present themselves to their kulasvami. In Warangal at the Katta Mallanna temple Yerra Gollas enact a ritual on an elaborate design on the floor on which the marriage of Ketamma, the first wife of Mallanna is performed. Newlyweds still wearing the marriage clothes (coloured yellow with turmeric), come to the Katta Mallanna temple, and perform the marriage of Mallanna with Ketamma as a fulfilment of their vow. After the marriage ritual Golla and Kuruva women dance on the design

and some get possessed. In Pali (Satara District) Khandoba's marriage with Mhalsa, his first wife from the Lingayat Vani (merchant) community, is annually performed. Dense clouds of turmeric powder envelop the marriage procession. Turmeric powder is reputed not only to heal but also to cause fertility in marriages. It is also identified with the life-giving sun (= Surya [masc.]) who in oral traditions impregnates women. The custom of girls "married" to MMKh is especially emphasized (and nowadays disapproved) in the cult of Khandoba where they are called Muralis. Along with the Vaghyas, the bards of Khandoba, the Muralis perform dances at jagrans, which are vigils in honour of Khandoba arranged by patron devotees of the god. These parties of devotees who sing and dance in honour of Khandoba may remind us of the *pumscali* ("harlot"), the Vratya, and the *magadha* or *suta* (bard) who jointly wandered and must have performed and begged in the name of their god Rudra. 17

The Desire for Nearness or Unity with the God

Not only is earthly life enriched and increased in the constant company of the god in thought or in ritual, but death promises nearness or even unity with the god. This even led to ritual suicide by heroes (viras), as in the case of the Viramustis mentioned in the *Kridabhiramamu*,the Kañcaviras of Mailara, and the Viras of the Khandoba cult.18 Unity or nearness may thus be rather violently achieved by special devotees (in the past), or comes with the normal death of those devotees who worship MMKh as their kulasvami. Numerous stone murtis and new as well as weathering inscriptions on steps, now more and more replaced by new steps and thus forgotten forever, commemorate heroes and/or ancestors in Jejuri. Similar to the ancestor cults of tribals like that of the Dhangars of Maharashtra or the Gonds, the ancestors are close to and eventually merge imperceptably with the clan deity in worship. But MMKh are not just deities of a single clan or caste, or group, but are lords of many clans and castes, as if of a confederacy. MMKh are the leaders of hosts, dead and alive, like Rudra. In accordance with the notion that the god is living here and now, it is not the distant Kailas

on which the departed soul rests. A certain concession seems to be made to this folk god on earth in a Marathi arati appended to the Sanskrit *Mallari Mahatmya* when it is said:

> The mountain of the fortress of Jejuri is in the form of a *ling*.
> In the world of mortals this is the peak of another Kailas.

Jejuri is Kailas an old Vaghya song confirms. 19 The same claim is made in Kommarelli in the case of Mallanna. Similarly the mountain of Shingnapur (Satara District) is said to be the seat of Sambhu or Mahadeva, who is rarely called *Siva* except in a Sanskritic text or context; and Srisailam (Kurnool District) is the seat of Mallikarjuna. Mallikarjuna also serves as a kind of Siva on earth, other than the distant puranic Siva, perhaps reflecting the notion preeminent amongst tribals that gods live on the surrounding mountains. Ancestors in the Khandoba cult, and Khandoba himself, are also worshiped in the form of metal plaques which depict heroes (Ma. *viras*;see plates 31-32). The worship of these plaques on Somavati Amavasya on the Karha river at Jejuri is accompanied by the songs and dances performed by the Muralis and Vaghyas. A common meal is shared by ancestors and living descendants. The ancestors appear and possess their descendants. What happens to ascendants after three generations nobody knows. They certainly do not become *visve devah* according to the classical sraddha ritual, which anyway, the *MV* maintains is not performed at Jejuri. Perhaps the lesser known Brahmanical "folk" antyesti rituals as dealt with by the 16th century Narayanabhatta explain the folk belief: here the deceased is transformed into Rudra by the ritual.20

Criteria for Ranking of Bhaktas

A blend of tapas and bhakti determines rank in the cult of MMKh, although there is no written explicit formulation for it. Translated into the notion of god as King, it is bravery (*saurya*)and loyalty (bhakti). This reflects the historical relationship between king and loyal followers, e.g., in the Vijayanagara empire.21 Feats of bravery are reflected (historically) in the self-mortifications of the various kinds of heroes (viras) in the MMKh cult. The ritual of hook-swinging may have been performed mainly to pay off vows in order to get life-increasing wishes fulfilled, like fortunes or children (a wish which after all may ultimately express a desire for "immortality"), but the essential aim of bhakti is nearness or unity with god. A Vaghya song typically expresses these aspirations:

> Give me the banner of success, o King Maluraya Martanda || But don't give me the sense of pride, [lest] people will laugh at you || This is all I beg from you || Protection and death signals your eternal, famous banner || 1 || Don't give me so many riches, I request you || I don't want the distinction between man and man. How is it that you make one serve with a flywhisk and grant another a huge vessel of success || 2 ||



31. Metal mould used by goldsmiths for preparing plaques. Such plaques are used in house shrines in the cult of Khandoba, and also in the cult of Mallanna. They depict ancestors as warriors (*viras*) and are used in ancestor worship (actual size 2½ x 2 inches). Photo by Günther Sontheimer.



32. A mould depicting Khandoba and his wife. At the bottom the usual dog is shown. Photo by Günther Sontheimer.

> Just give me kith and kin, for having a family, for making my clan grow || Don't send me away and make me wander, my life remains with you || Your eternal, famous banner of success flutters || 3 || Keep, o keep your shadow over Sivaji Vaghya || With the mercy of love, let me and my companion Ramcandra sit beneath it. People will resort to your feet, o Lord, with the new sword in your hand || 4 || 22

The most faithful bhakta does not wish anything except the company, nearness or unity with the god. The god himself is (Ma.) *bhukela* ="hungry for true bhaktas" (*MV* 5.12), or (Tel.) *bhaktavatsala* ="gracious to his bhaktas." Thus according to a legend it was a member of the "untouchable" Mang (Matanga) caste who sacrificed his life for the foundation of the fortress in Jejuri. This is interpreted as an act of bhakti because by his sacrifice he wanted to persuade Siva to stay forever on earth, that is in Jejuri (which Siva did). The Mang became the guardian god of the temple having his shrine near the main gate of the outer temple wall. His name is Yesvant Rao and he became a *havildar* (officer of a fort). Today he is famous for healing bone fractures when vows are made to him. Thus it appears that the divine doctor, Rudra, alias Khandoba, has delegated some of the medicinal powers to Yesvant Rao and thus moved to a greater degree of purity, because traditionally doctors are ritually impure.23 Similarly the existence and practice of values of faithfulness and bravery may elevate the devotee or hero while transfering something of his own lowliness to his god or lord. Yesvant Rao's legend reminds us of the Velugoti family to which the chiefs of Venkatagaon belonged. They first came into

prominence during the reign of the Kakatiya king Ganapati who ruled at Warangal from 1198 to 1263 AD. The founder of the Recerla clan, of which the Velugoti family is an offshoot, was a farmer at the village Anumangallu, called Cevvi Reddi.24 The *Velugotivarivamsavali* contains variants of the story of Cevvi Reddi.

According to one version, Cevvi Reddi discovered by chance a *treasure trove*,to take possession of which he had to sacrifice his faithful Untouchable servant *Reca*.The servant willingly offered himself as the victim. In pursuance of a promise Cevvi Reddi changed the name of his *gotra* into Recerla in commemoration of his faithful servant who cheerfully faced death for his benefit.

According to another version, Cevvi Reddi, while returning home from his field after dark, encounters a *vetala*,a demon. Cevvi Reddi bravely defends himself with a club; the demon, pleased with his bravery, confers upon him certain favours and vanishes. From then on

Cevvi Reddi became popular as Betala Reddi, whom King Ganapati invited to his court and granted favors including the government of a district. Finally he establishes a kingdom at Recerla.

The *Mallari Mahatmya* explains the name of Mallari in a similar way: Martanda Bhairava is pleased by the bravery of the defeated demon hero (vira) Malla (*M*.*Mah*.16.41) and on the request of Malla his name becomes part of Martanda's name. Martanda is now called Mallari = "the enemy of Malla" (*M*.*Mah*.17.36).

Devotion and tapas are also the elements in another prototype of a bhakta in the Khandoba cult. Local traditions in Jejuri tell of a bhakta who every day climbed up the path to the old Khandoba temple on the distant, high plateau (Karhe Pathar). He certainly did not go there for material wealth, but to be near his god. When the bhakta grew too old to make the arduous ascent, the god descended from the high, distant hill to the hill just above the town of Jejuri. On account of his devotion and self-sacrifice the devotee and his descendants were given the first rank amongst the *mankaris* (Ma.), that is, those bhaktas entitled to ritual privileges in temple rituals. Thus the flagstaffs of the descendants of the devotee still have precedence over those of other bhaktas in processions.

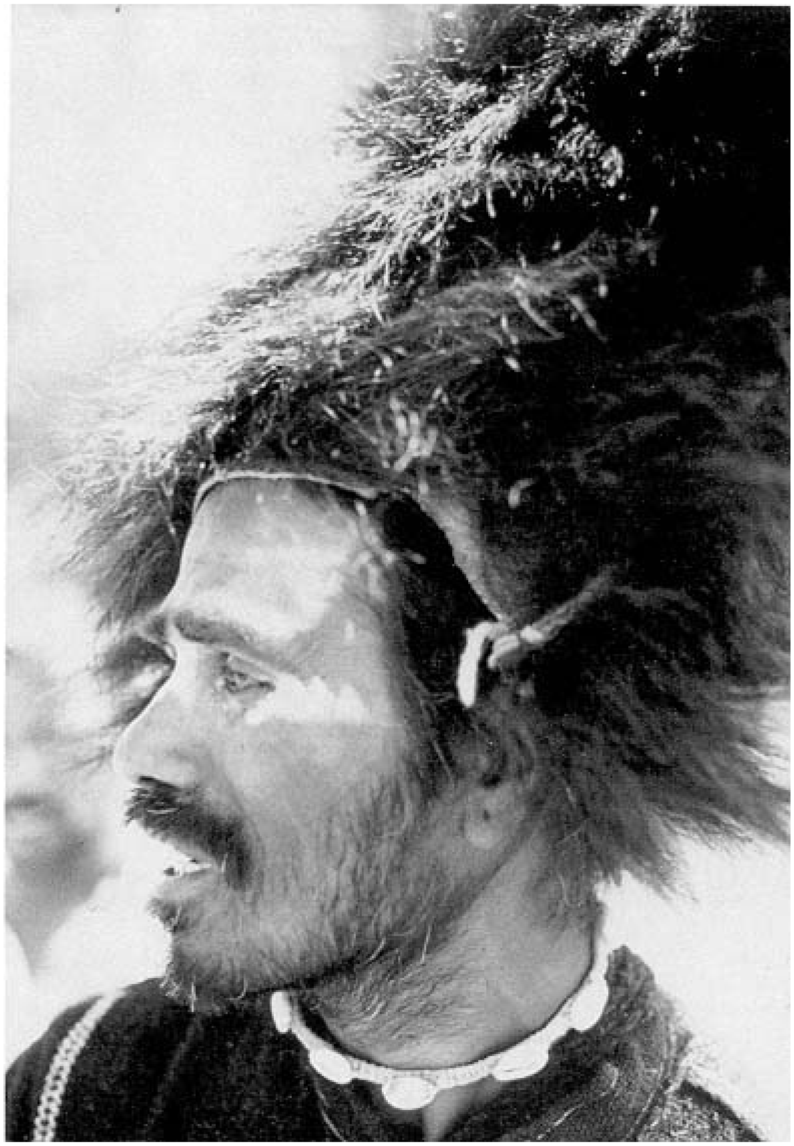
C. The Followers of Mailara, Mallanna, and Khandoba According to Ritual, Oral Literature, and History

The Vaggayyas and the Festival at Devaragudda and Mailar

Especially noteworthy are two great festivals which are celebrated in the cult of Mailara: the Dasara festival at Devaragudda (at Ranebennur near Harihar, Dharwad District) and the festival at Mailar (Hadagalli Taluka, Bellari District) in the month of Magha (February/ March). The latter lasts for eleven days beginning from Rathasaptami day and ending two days after the full moon day. On both occasions the struggle is against the demons Mani and Malla. Some say in Devaragudda that Malla was killed in Devaragudda and Mani at Mailar, but in Mailar we are told that it was here that Manikasura and Mallasura were killed in battle. A mock battle against the demon is enacted in Mailar. The special followers of Mailara, the Vaggayyas (see plates 33 and 34), who closely resemble the ancient Vratyas, the followers of Rudra, play a prominent role in the ritual. They are also called Gorappas or Goravas and are mentioned in medieval Kannada inscriptions. Although most of the Vaggayyas are from the Kuruba shepherd



33. A Vaggayya or Gorappa from Karnataka in his black woollen overcoat that is beset with a zigzag pattern and has the typical fringes at the bottom. The indispensible begging bowl from which he eats like a dog at rituals is not visible. Photo by Günther Sontheimer.



34. A Vaggayya from southern Andhra/Karnataka with a bearskin cap and a necklace of cowrie shells. Photo by Günther Sontheimer.

community, there are also members of other communities, from the low Talvara (sword) caste up to (allegedly) the Brahmans. But whereas the Kurubas are Vaggayyas for their whole life, most of the members of other communities observe the rites of a Vaggayya/Gorappa only on special occasions. Among the Talvaras, the eldest son should become a Gorappa after his father dies. He does not regularly wear the typical attire of a Gorappa. He is supposed to wear it on every full moon day, on Sundays, and during the (Ka.) jatras. On these days he goes begging.

On the first day of the battle ritual a black flag is hoisted as a sign that war is declared against the demons. Milk is boiled and is allowed to spill as a good omen forecasting the victory of Mailara. Again the Vedic Rudra comes to mind: it is milk which is boiled in the *pravargya* ritual in a vessel called *gharma*.The vessel is also called *mahavira* and Rudra is identified with it. 25 The next day group fighting is enacted which involves throwing sweets at each other. This is said to be a sign that war has begun. Whereas Manikasura is defeated easily (it is not shown how), Mallasura accepts defeat only on the eleventh day. Early in the morning before sunrise thousands of devotees, many of them temporary or lifelong Gorappas dressed in their long, black woollen gowns converge on a hillock outside Mailar. They are the army of Mailara. The whole army of devotees, said to (mythically) consist of seven crores (Ka. *yelkoti*),moves towards the hill in complete silence. Many devotees carry brass torches which evokes the impression of a nocturnal wild hunt of Rudra. The god is represented by the Svami of the Devasthan (temple) who rides a white stallion and is accompanied by a bearer of a royal

parasol. Besides there are murtis of Mailara and his wife mounted on a wooden structure covered by cloth. When the top of the hill is reached the masks and the huge leather sandals of the god and his wife are quickly carried around a platform seven times accompanied by thick throngs of devotees who loudly scream "Yelkoti Mallari Martanda."26 *Yelkot* may also refer to the seven crores of enemies defeated by Mailara, but throughout the tradition of MMKh it is also suggested that enemies may become devotees of the god. Finally, the god has defeated and slain the demon: a cloth which has so far concealed the huge wooden mask of the demon is pulled away from under the feet of the deities. The day closes with the *karnikotsava* (festival of prophecy). This ritual is more or less the same at Devaragudda. It takes place there during the Dasara time and is performed on the ninth day.27 In Mailar an old Kuruba who has fasted for eleven days (in Devaragudda on the ninth day) climbs a bow (Ka. *billa*)which is eighteen feet high. After climbing the bow to the top he is possessed by the god

in the form of wind. He then utters prophecies for the coming year. He did not participate in the activities of the other Vaggayyas, but (as observed in Devaragudda) quietly sits under a Banyan tree in a grove until his appointed moment has come. At his side the huge bow is placed against the tree (see plate 35). The Vaggayya's attire and the rite he performs remind us of the Ekavratya as described in *AV* XV who becomes Rudra and is described as having a red back and a black belly (*AV* XV.1.7.). The shoulders and back of the Vaggayya who becomes Mailara are covered by a red cloth with the zig zag border characteristic of the dress of the Vaggayyas and imitative of a rugged fur; in front the black woollen gown in visible.

Another important ritual in Mailar and Devaragudda is the *pavada*,a "heroic, magical feat." 28 In Mailar it is celebrated after the slaying of the demon, in Devaragudda on Dasara day. It is performed by the so-called Kañcaviras, recruited especially from Kuruba Vaggayyas, and (in Devaragudda) also by Madigas. Their heroic feats reflect an aggressive loyalty towards their god. They wield weapons like iron prongs, swords or tridents, and pierce their calves with painted iron rods, or with an instrument resembling a pointed tent peg made of the wood of a palm tree. The most important incident of the ritual is carried out by a young unmarried Vaggayya preferably twelve years old. He is the first who has to perform the ritual of piercing the leg in front of the god. He then simultaneously passes two thorny twigs of the *babbuli* tree through the wound. After that he passes a long rope through the wound. One might wonder whether the rope in this act of bravery does not indicate the tie with which an initiate symbolically binds himself to the god. The whole ritual also has (self-) sacrificial undercurrents. Thus, it is said that once upon a time the god demanded human sacrifice. Some exquisitely carved medieval stone heads, apparently from murtis, are deposited behind the temple in Mailar where the pavada is performed. They are said to be the heads of viras who died in self-sacrifice. The term Kañcavira (so far the etymology is unclear) is locally said to be a corrupt form of pañcaviras, that is, "five heroes" who voluntarily cut off their heads in front of the god. Curiously this story resembles the tradition of Mhaskoba in Maharashtra where the god demanded as a proof of faith the five immature children of the founder of the cult. The god obligingly turned the victims into lambs and the children were left unscathed. Dhangar shepherds of Maharashtra still offer a "row" (Ma. *davan* < Skt. *damani*)of five sheep to Khandoba. There are persistent and pervasive suggestions that in the past young rams and humans could be alternate sacrificial victims.29 The Kurubas



35. The oldest Kuruba who climbs an eighteen foot-high bow on the right) during the Dasara festival and in the process becomes "Mailara." Devaragudda, Dharwad District, Karnataka. Photo by Günther Sontheimer.

are said to have gained their importance in Mailar because Mailara slew the demon in the form of a Kuruba. A reflection of this may still be the substitute sacrifice of a lamb by Kurubas on the day of the battle. It is taken to the hill where the demon manifests itself in the form of a wooden mask, actually somewhere to the side of the hill. 30 Again we have the suggestion that the enemy of the god, the demon, becomes the follower (alive, or dead in the form of a bhuta), or we may say, the demon becomes a devotee. While considering the sacrificial connotations in the ritual connected with Mailara we may start wondering whether the "sacrifice" of the Kuruba youth which takes place at the end of the battle, does not faintly echo an incident in the asvamedha sacrifice. Both festivals, at Mailar and Devaragudda, have close connection with horse rituals and they resound with the cracks of the whips of Gorappas. They enact the galloping of horses and are possessed by the wind of the god. The Gorappas, who are also called Kudureyappas, are said to be the cavalry of the god, and the festivals are also called (Ka.) *kudureya habba* (the festival of the horse). It does not, therefore, seem too farfetched to refer to the Vedic *Vadhulasutra*,which says that at the end of the asvamedha the immature, weeping son of a suta (bard) is to slaughter the horse, whose head falls off in the process. The youth is to lose his own head if he does not know how to properly cut up the horse, as the latter has to be restored thereafter. Falk suggests that the youth has been selected by a game of dice in which the loser is called "dog." In younger texts the youth, as the dog, is no longer the scapegoat, but an actual dog is killed.31 No actual asvamedha, of course, or anything resembling it is practised in Mailar

or Devaragudda, but we should keep in mind the importance of the horse in the Dasara ritual which may have had its antecedent in the classical asvamedha sacrifice. Horses in the Dasara ritual were especially conspicuous at the spatially and historically close capital of the Vijayanagara empire.32 Moreover, the young Kañcavira who is the "dog" of Mailara and who sacrifices himself to his god, the "Lord of the Horses" (Skt. *hayapati*,or *asvapati*),tying himself to the god by passing a rope through his leg, strengthens the impression that the ritual has contacts with the Vedic Rudra. In the *Vadhulasutra* the young suta is taught a song with which earth, ether, and wind are requested to heal the injuries of the horse, and heaven and the *naksatras* are involved to restore the form of the horse.33 In the cult of MMKh it is a pinch of turmeric powder, the very substance of the sun, which heals the wounds of the victims with immediate effect.

The Expelled Son of the Kapus/Reddis

The Kapus or Reddis are the most important agriculturist caste of Andhra, equivalent to the Marathas of Maharashtra and the Gavdas of Karnataka. In the traditions of Komarelli and Ailoni, Mallanna is said to have been born miraculously as the seventh and youngest son of Adireddi and Nllamma, king and queen of Kollapuri Patnam. 34 According to the myths told in these traditions, when these two treat Paramesvara with miserliness and forgetfulness, the god appears in the form of a Jangama and turns the tide of their fortune. Their kingdom becomes ridden with drought and famine, and the cattle perish. Kollapuri Patnam becomes a ghost city. Adireddi and Nilamma leave Kollapuri with their six sons. They live in the wilderness, or rather in the outskirts of Kalyanapuri Patnam. They are not allowed by the "linga-wearers," i.e., the Lingayats, to enter the city. They live by selling firewood, work as laborers, and collect food in the forest for twelve years. During this period they pray to Siva to rescue them from their plight. It is then that Siva the bhaktavatsala turns up in the disguise of a Jangama promising them a son who would be of great strength, illustrious, and bear the name Mallanna. Mallanna is born (Tel. *mayamanusa vigrahadu*)and eventually restores his family to power and rules Kollapuri Patnam. But the brothers or rather the six sisters-in-law turn against him and when the property is divided (land, cattle, and houses) Mallanna receives as his share uncultivable land, that is, hilly and forested areas, and bullocks not capable of drawing the plough. Mallanna clears the forest for cultivation by felling trees, digging up termite mounds (Tel. *putta*)and burning the undergrowth. While digging the termite mound he hits upon a golden nose ring. Once upon a time Parvati was presented a young sheep by Siva which multiplied to the amount of one crore. Parvati kept her nose ring as a lock on the sheep. Satisfied with the bhakti of Mallanna, Parvati directs him to tend them for seven years and to take care to kindle the fire near the termite mound perpetually. In accordance with the command of Parvati, Mallanna makes a perpetual fire in a bowl-shaped brazier (Tel. *kumpati*).He milks the sheep every day, boils the milk in the kumpati, and worships the termite mound by pouring the boiled milk into it.

In the different versions of the story told by the Gollas, who are the traditional pastoralists of Andhra, certain motifs remain constant: the youngest brother who has to be satisfied with the wilderness as his share and is driven out, like Rudra, the youngest son of Brahma, or the

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kanistha of the Vratyas who becomes nirvasita and has to seek his fortune to establish himself. In the case of the Vratya, cows had to be gained on an expedition as the basis for establishing his own household. 35 Throughout the oral traditions of Mallanna we hear about the adventurous efforts of Mallanna to win recognition and supremacy over his adversaries, like the kanistha Vratya "who wants to come to the top."36

Another recurring feature of the oral tradition is the association of fire with the termite mound from which Mailara/Martanda Bhairava (the "sun") also emerged in Mailar. When the fireindispensible to boil the sheep milk, which is ambrosia (Tel. *amrutamu*)nearthe mound is extinguished, Mallanna has to steal Agni from a Raksasa who holds captive the Brahman girl Ratnangi. Slaying the demon he gains both, the fire and the girl. There is no mention in this version to this effect, but we may surmise that the Raksasa is a Brahmaraksasa.37 His skull (Tel. *netti*, *pucca*, *kapalamu*)serves as the bowl for gruel (Tel. *ambali totti*).The fire seems to be closely connected with the termite mound and the origin of Martanda Bhairava. In another legend Mallanna finds sheep and Bhairava in the form of a dog in the mound.38 Oral traditions call him Bayanna, who is his brother and is found in the mound. He is a naked (cf. Nagna-Bhairava), rather stern character, particularly bent on protecting the purity of the sheep flock.39 He is one-legged and

may be compared with Ekapad Bhairava or *aja eka-pada* who besides being one of the Maruts in the R*gveda* and *AV*,is also identifiable with Rudra and Indra.

The Marriages of Mailara, Mallanna, and Khandoba

Mallanna, although miraculously born as the son of Adireddi and Nilamma, exists or moves outside of or between castes, and that is the seed and precondition of his eventual power and rise to a king of all. Much to the displeasure of his brothers and sisters-in-law he did not marry a girl from their caste. He marries Ratnangi, a Brahman girl; he also married Pagidikalli Padmaksi after miraculously performing several tests. Ultimately he has five wives, like Khandoba. But it is mostly two wives who are prominent in the cult of MMKh. One is closely connected with the Lingayats. She is said to be a Vani (Ma. grain merchant) and is variously called (in Tel.) Bhramaramba Medala, Madala, Madaci, or (in Ka.) Malaci, Malavva, Gangi Malavva, or (in Ma.) Mhalsa. Thus Mallanna also takes the form of a merchant, and is often mentioned in connection with itinerant merchants, like the Perikes or the Gone Kapus (Tel. *gone*:jute bag).40 In Malegaon, the Khandoba center in the Nanded district, Khandoba is said to have manifested himself in a jute bag of a

merchant caravan. 41 The god coming along with merchants in the form of a stone lodged in the hoof of pack oxen is a frequent motif in the oral traditions of the Dhangar shepherds. In this way Khandoba comes to marry Mhalsa, the daughter of Timma Set, a Lingayat Vani, at Pali in the Satara district. According to the Golla traditions a Kommarelli Mallanna comes riding on a horse to the Balijas in Sindhu Patnam in the form of an itinerant bangle seller named Gajula Mali Setti. The Balijas have amassed their riches by cheating the traders and others who pass through their town. By his powers Mallanna outtricks the traders, acquires all their wealth and marries Balije Madalamma showing her his greatness (*mahima*).She fails to recognize it in him when he turns into a leper. Thus again he moves out in search of a true, devoted wife and finds her in Golla Ketamma. She is the daughter of rich Gollas who own a big herd of sheep. They are courteous, truthful, and generous.42 The god marrying a tribal woman is common all over the Deccan and goes back to the Cankam literature where it is the tribal Valli who is the beloved of Murukan.43 The "marriage" with the tribal woman often has elements of transgression and is an occasion to display the miraculous feats of the god. In the case of Banai, he herds nine lakhs of sheep all alone and even slaughters all of them, only to restore them to life with a pinch of turmeric powder.44 Invariably the oral traditions about two wives, one coming from the merchant community (identified with Parvati on the Sanskritic level), and the other coming from the "forest" (often identified with the classical Ganga), oscillate between the two poles of a love relationship (as between the early Murukan and Valli) and bhakti and/or renunciation. In the old songs of the Vaghyas Khandoba is often blamed by Mhalsa for his infatuation towards the dirty Banai. The songs of the Vaghyas regarding Khandoba's wives are often ambiguous: they may be understood as erotic, but the listener may also interpret them in terms of bhakti. Khandoba, who may turn up as a Pathan on horseback, actually has five wives in Jejuri: Mhalsa, the Lingayat; Banai, the Dhangar shepherdess; Phulai Malin, from the gardener caste; Rambhai Simpin, the tailor woman; and Candai Bhagvani, the Muslim woman. By his marriages he transgresses the normal social order, yet this transgression fuses together heterogenous groups with different social and ecological backgrounds. Notions of ritual purity and impurity tend to be obliterated in his cult. No wonder the cantankerous "first" wife, Mhalsa, coming from the vegetarian Lingayat caste complains about Banai who has polluted the house, is uncouth and stinks, and should actually stay in the wilderness (Ma. *ran*)where she comes from.45 Yet Mhalsa catches fish and Banu (Banai)

watches the fun (Ma. *tamasa*)."Where is the Lingayat in this?" Not only that, but

> Banu and Mhalsa are of different castes
> For the god Mallari they eat from the same plate
> The Banai of the Dhangars, the Mhalsa of the Vanis
> How can she swallow (even) a morsel? 46

In Devaragudda the episodes of the hunt and the love adventure of the god with Kurubattyavva, the shepherd girl, are enacted by the devotees after Dasara. The god is taken to the river on horseback and is accompanied by one group

equipped with whatever weapons there are in the temple. There are by agreement two parties. One is Mailara's and the other is his father-in-law's. During the mock huntsome people pretending to be tigers and others chasing themMailara is understood to love the Kuruba girl. The news leaks out and reaches his first wife Gangi Malavva. Thus by the time the first party returns from the mock hunt they are not allowed to enter the temple by the Gorappas and Gorammas who are already in the temple. They enact the anger of Mailara's first wife by evicting Mailara as well as the hunters. After Mailara's party confesses the mistake they are allowed inside.

The Encounter with Other Religions

The recognition of MMKh as Mallikarjuna, Sadasiva, Tribhuvana and so on, although claimed by his followers, was not undisputed by certain other groups. Some Jains seem to have accepted Khandoba as their *tirthankara* Mallinatha, perhaps confusing him with Mallanatha = the "Lord of Malla" (*M.Mah*.19.3), according to earliest inscriptional reference in Jejuri.47 They also called the Mallikarjuna of Srisailam Mallinatha.48 Mani, the demon, is mentioned in the context of earlier Jain *basadis* superseded by MMKh cults. The temple at Mailar is thus said to have been a Jain establishment. Actually it may have been Manibhadra, the tutelary deity of caravans, popular among Jains, who was worshiped amongst Jains, e.g., in Prempur near Bidar in Karnataka. The present-day temple is situated on a traditional trade route leading from the Godavari Valley, via Malegaon to Bidar. A lain murti of a person in dhyana posture shows the Jain affiliation. The murti is now relegated to a small shrine at the border of the ksetra. The Brahmanical *Mallari Mahatmya* which is connected with Prempur expressly refers to the place as "the capital of the enemy of Mani" (18.9: Manidvisa) and

not to Malla, or "Mani *and* Malla." In front of the temple a huge stone naga (serpent) faces Khandoba in the temple and takes the position of the defeated demon who has turned into a bhakta. If it is true that Manibhadra and Maninaga are identical this would further suggest a connection with the Jains. Mani, who is a great hero (vira) in the *Mallari Mahatmya*,may be one of the fifty-two viras (*bavan vir*)mentioned in Jain sources. 49 The Jain author Brahmasiva (c. 1150-60) of Karnataka classed Mailara amongst the ksudradevatas and claimed that he was a Jain warrior who died with obstinate valour in battle.

Reputed Virasaiva saints like Sankaradasimayya tried to prove that Mailara was nobody else than a *demon* and that it was Siva and not Mailara who slew Malla.50 Yet Lingayats, especially the common folk, accepted MMKh and are often temple priests (as in Devaragudda). Or else they established temples, such as one in Odela (Karimnagar District) which was founded by a Balajiga.

Cakradhara, the "founder" of the Mahanubhava sect predicted in the thirteenth century that the Visnu and Siva temples would decay and ksetrapalas like *Mairala* would become established in the Kaliyuga.51 This prediction can actually be said to have been confirmed by historical facts if we think of the fall of the Yadava empire and the eventual decay of its ("Hemadpanti") temples. In the fourteenth century the *Kridabhiramamu* praises the village deity Mailara as the "great hunter," "ocean of kindness," "who makes an impossible task possible (such as catching an invisible deer)" and commends him "to the praise of noble people."52 It may have been about the same time when the *Mallari Mahatmya* established an "etymological" identification of Mailara/Mallari and Mairala with Sambhu and Visnu.53

Some Maharashtrian bhakti saints also tended to classify Khandoba as a ksetrapala or ksudradevata or simply a bhuta. Saint Ramdas ranked him in one place of his work amongst the village deities or ghosts and in other places identified him with Rama. He also called him Mallu Khan.54

According to the Golla Katha of Hyderabad the confrontation between Mallanna and the Balijas (i.e., Lingayats), the brothers of Madalamma, ends by Mallanna turning them into dogs and causing them to be reborn as Voggus. They behave like dogs (in rituals), get possessed by Mallanna and make predictions.55 Mallanna or Khandoba is also called Rautray at Devara Hippargi near Bijapur. The temple clearly has Muslim antecedents. Rautray fights a Lingayat Raksasa, called Dariyappa who lives in a matha. Instead of the usual Nandi in front of the temple at Devara Hippargi we find here the horse as *vahana*.

MMKh's relationship, as we have indicated, also extends to the Muslims. Thus a Golla katha tells us how Mallanna acquired turmeric powder (Tel. *pasupu bandaru*)which he needed for his marriage with Bhramaramba. 56 He has to fetch it from Mecca (*sic*)where he goes in the guise (avatara) of a fakir. The inhabitants of Mecca are Siva bhaktas. They wear a waist band (Tel. *mola daram*),never drink liquor or eat meat (Tel. *madhu mamsamu*).But he spoils their customs and traditions (Tel. *acara vyavaharalu*).Mallanna spends 12 years in Mecca as a servant. He makes the well go dry. The inhabitants of Mecca ask him if he knows any means of restoring the water to the well. He tells them that if they slaughter a black cow (Tel. *karri avu*)and eat it, the water in the well will be restored. He makes them cook *kanduru* (Tel. for a Biryani-like dish) with the meat of the black cow and causes them to smoke *gañja*.He then asks them to look into the well and they see water. They develop a great faith in Mallanna. When after twelve years the well is again filled with water, bandaru (which may also mean *gold* and is the substitute for gold in the rituals of the MMKh cult) erupts near the well. The inhabitants of Mecca get engrossed by the sight of water and gold and, infatuated, they fall into a deep slumber (apparently caused by Mallanna). When they wake up Mallanna has disappeared with the bandaru. They launch a hunt for Mallanna whom they call Malkhan. They almost catch up with him. At that moment Mallanna jumps into the Ganga (a general name of a river) from which an outstretched arm emerges. The Turakas (Turks) wonder whose hand it could be and chop it off. Ganga thus saves Mallanna with the hand. In return for this help Mallanna promises Ganga that she would be known as Bipatma (Bibi + Padma) and worshiped every year. She would be taken in a procession on an elephant on the day of the *urus* of Pirla Panduga.

Although the particular place of the celebration of Ganga could not be ascertained and this tradition seems to be confusing, the general background becomes clear if we think of the historical symbiosis in the Deccan between Lingayats and Muslims on the level of folk religion and in the realm of mysticism. Sufis and Lingayats could identify to some extent on the level of mysticism. Rituals in which a jangama turns up in a procession dressed as a Pir are known from Bidar.57 Mallanna and Khandoba were worshiped by Lingayats *and* Muslims. In a Marathi inscription dated Saka 1625 and Fasli 1113 (1703) the Siva of the Lingayats is identified with Mallukhan: *Sri guruli*(*n*)*ga ja*(*n*)*gama vibhutarudraksa-bhusena sadas*(*s*)*i*(*i*)*va s*(*s*)*ankara s*(*s*)*ambhu Mahadeva Ma*(*a*)*harudra*: *Malus*(*kh*)*an*.58It is, however, Khandoba who is very often called Mallu Khan or Ajmat Khan and his affiliation with the Muslims is visible in

the style of his temples (as in Jejuri or in Andur, Osmanabad District). He appears as a Pathan on horseback, one of his wives is Muslim, and the keeper of the god's horses and his kotval is a Muslim in Jejuri. In the *Martanda Vijaya* (24.30-31) Muslims are expressly said to be his bhaktas. A typical instance of this mutual appreciation is a special order issued by the Sultan of Bijapur, Ibrahim II in 1614, in which he assured the right of pilgrims to perform rituals to Khanderao or Mallari at Naldurg and the reinstatement of the annual jatra. 59 It is only when attacked that Khandoba reacts violently. Thus the *Martanda Vijaya* (36.43) also mentions that Martanda Bhairava annihilated the Mlecchas, i.e., Muslims. At Prempur, near the capital of the Bidar Sultanate, the daityas Mani and Malla are said to have been Muslim kings. And in the *Jayadri Mahatmya* which pertains to Jejuri, the daityas are said to have been born in the "Yavanakula."60 According to the local legend and songs of the Vaghyas, 900,000 hornets were sent by Khandoba through a hole in the wall of the fortress at Jejuri to drive away the army of Aurangzeb. The same story involving hornets is told by Gollas about Srisailam:61 In this account, Chatrapati Sivaji, while fighting Aurangzeb, enters the forest of Srisailam. Feeling very thirsty he approaches Parvati and requests her to give him a bowl of milk (Tel. *pala cambu*).Before Sivaji can empty the bowl Parvati manifests herself in innumerable lives (Tel. *janmalu*),or rather bhramaras (Tel. *tummeda*:hornets), attacks Aurangzeb, and uproots his army. When Sivaji sees the slain enemies, he addresses her: "From now on your name is not Parvati, you are Bhramaramba." To this day one can hear the sound of hornets (Tel. *tummedala jhumkaramu*)in the wall behind Bhramaramba.

On the whole we may draw the conclusion that, like the ancient Rudra, MMKh seemed to be acceptable to the common folk irrespective of caste and creed. The *Martanda Vijaya* (5.12; 24.30u.33) summarizes this in its own way: "Hungry" for devotees Martanda Bhairava does not know of jati, varna, or kula (eminent family). Candalas and Mlecchas are welcome as bhaktas.

The Position of the Brahmans and the Mallari Mahatmya

Seen from the viewpoint of folk religion, the position of the Brahmans in the cult of MMKh was not and is still not dominant. Nor was it *a priori* established according to orthodox-sastric principles. Yet many Brahmans claimed them as their kulasvami. The Brahmans' principles and ideals tended to be incorporated and subordinated to folk religion.

Sanganna, the son of Brahmans of the Visvamitra Gotra, is born at the same time as Mallanna according to the traditions of the

Gollas. He becomes Mallanna's companion, is equal to him, and is also called the disciple of Mallanna. 62 On the puranic level Visnu is identified with the brother-in-law of Khandoba, who is on the folk level his minister (Heggadi Pradhan), the brother of Mhalsa and a Lingayat (Saivite) Vani. Sri Venkatesvara of Tirupati in Andhra is also a brother-in-law of Mallanna. Mallanna, while testing the bhakti of his wife Balija Madalamma, keeps her in a fort on a mountain. He goes away and returns as a leper. She curses him, and wishes that he dies. Her duty is to fetch water to cure him, but Mallanna makes all the water disappear. Madalamma plans to go to Tirupati, to her brother Venkatesvara (popularly known as Venkanna) to fetch water. Before she goes to him, Mallanna arrives at Tirupati and warns Venkatesvara not to give her any water. Not to displease his sister, and rather scared of Mallanna, Venkatesvara leaves Tirupati to avoid his sister. This episode shows Mallanna was still superior to Venkatesvara.63

In Devaragudda the minister is actually represented as Visnu with sword, mace, conch, and "book," but he is assigned a place outside the temple precincts. The *Martanda Vijaya* knows a story which shows the Brahmans were not only worshippers of Khandoba, but had to respect and accept certain basic incidents of the cults lest they would be confronted with evil consequences:

> A mischievous Brahman mocks at a Vaghya and his chain (then) carried around the neck: "How can your Mallari possibly break the worldly fetters (Ma. *bhavabandhana*)?If you bind it to your neck, and, calling his name, break it with one jerk, then I shall rest assured." To the dismay of the Brahman the Vaghya breaks the chain with a single jerk calling upon Malhari, "the liberator from worldly fetters" (Ma. *bhavamocaka*).The Brahman turns into a dog, bites people so that they take to their heels. His wife makes a vow to Martanda to perform a yatra without footwear so that her husband may get freed of his affliction. His *ahamkar* vanishes and he becomes Malhari's bhakta. (*MV* 34.54-70)

Versions of the myth of Mallari probably precede the Sanskrit *Mallari Mahatmya*.According to an inscription at the temple of Ailoni dated 1369 it is Arjuna with the help of Siva who kills the demon Malla. Siva is from then onwards called Mallikarjuna.64 The *Mallari Mahatmya*,considered to belong to the *Ksetrakanda* of the *Brahmandapurana*,purports to point out the authoritative, puranic grounds and to establish the Brahmanical credentials of the cult of Mailara and Khandoba. The work is a masterpiece not only because of its beautiful, narrative style, but

also for its skillful attempt at transforming a rather "rustic," "demonic," "impure," and "violent" cult. Siva becomes an avatara on the request of the seven Rsis, or Brahmans (*dharmaputras*),as Indra and Visnu are unable to defeat the demons. They became invincible on account of their tapas which had elicited a boon from Brahma. As Martanda Bhairava, Siva fights the demons Mani and Malla who raided the asrama of the Rsis, overthrew the yajña (and even urinated into the sacrificial fire), killed cows, and molested the women of the Brahmans. Thus everything that is sacred to the Brahmanical order is at stake, but the demons are defeated in a tremendous battle, a *rana-yajña*,or battlesacrifice. After the defeat of the valorous demon kings, their *ahamkar* disappears and on their death they attain the god (*sannidhi* or *sayujyata*,the term also used in the *M.Mah*.is *vilaya*:17.42). We have attempted to show elsewhere that Mani and Malla, the demon kings, are an epitome of the rising king, the "robber king," and of communities not exactly belonging to the Brahmanical fold or paying respect to its orthodox-sastric implications like yajña, varna etc. 65 The Brahmanical attitude to the "outlandish," impure manifestations, as exemplified by the Puranas and, in the particular case, in the *Mallari Mahatmya*,was to incorporate or ignore some aspects of these cults and demonize others. Mani and Malla were said to belong to the Prahlada kula.66 That they made their followers worship their murtis is noted as especially aggravating and objectionable.67 We may sense here perhaps an attitude which was opposed to the old notion that a king could be a god who stands at the top of his own spiritual, ritual, and social hierarchical model without overriding Brahmanical control. According to the *Mallari Mahatmya*,the folk deity was split into the pure puranic Siva and the demon who is impure until he is defeated and becomes the demon devotee, and a dvarapala. He is now subordinated to a Siva, who protects the yajña and dharma of the Brahmanical order. As Shulman has observed of the bandit king or pre-

empire king: "His world is the ancient sacrificial universe which allows destruction its place before the splitting of Brahman and kingship in the interests of maintaining the Brahman's ideal uncontaminating sacrifice."68 Historically, many Desastha Brahmans were worshippers of Khandoba and seemed to be warriors rather than "ideal Brahmans." For instance, a Maratha general of the artillery, Panse, whose fort was called Malhargad, donated the huge sword to Khandoba in the eighteenth century.69 The sword was given a mythical ancestry which was traced back to Asvatthaman and his avenging sword.70

The splitting of the folk deity into the demon and Siva seems to be

also reflected in our view in the battle ritual at Mailar. At the end of the battle, the head of the demon, which is not to be seen before this moment, appears at the feet of the god, as if the god has shed his own asuric form.

The status of the folk deity is also slowly eroded by the texts. The *Mallari Mahatmya* (18.14) still mentions amongst the offerings of the gods to Mallari/Mairala incense, lights, betel, and animals (*pasu*).The Marathi version by Siddhapal Kesari is also explicit and stresses that plates filled with meat, etc., are offerings to the god Mairala (18.19). In the *Mallari Mahatmya* the dying demon requests Malla that Siva should fulfill the wishes of those bhaktas who worship him by *chedapatadi*,by "causing themselves to be cut, etc." This may refer to the hook-swinging rite nowadays only continuing in a mild form, or the self-mortification of the viras (17.37). The Marathi translation of the *Mallari Mahatmya* by Siddhapal Kesari, however, renders these customs disparagingly as *ugra* (violent, demonic) bhakti. The *Martanda Vijaya* (by Gangadhara, of 1821) goes even a step further and styles animal sacrifices and self-tortures as (demonic) *raksasi* bhakti (35.53).

In accordance with this evaluation of the modes of bhakti, worship was further restructured in the texts. For instance, possession (so essential in folk religion) by the god in the form of the wind has the still lower demonic appellation of pisaci bhakti. but *sattviki* bhakti, "true bhakti," is the feeding of a Brahman in the form of Martanda (*MV* 35.47, 55; 35.48, 61).

It was on a Sunday, on the sixth of the month of Margasirsa (Campasathi) that Martanda and his wife (sakti) Martanda Bhairavi manifested themselves at Prempur as svayambhu lingas made of clay under a wishing tree, together with Mani who rides a horse (*M.Mah*.18.3f.). He manifested himself on the request and for the protection (*raksartham*)of the dharmaputras (*M.Mah*.18.5f.). In the "city of Prempur" the god was made accessible to all varnas and jatis through dhyana (meditation) (*M.Mah*.18.9); and he fulfills wishes: cattle, sons, horses, and a kingdom without enemies, full of horses and elephants, and women for kings (18.28f.) and, for Brahmans, recognition by the king, and victory in disputes against those who speak wrongly or pervertedly (18.30).

We must voice some caution as to the results and influence of the *Mallari Mahatmya*.Its full contents are vaguely known by circles beyond the Brahmans. Most of the devotees apprehend that Siva has become an avatar to kill the demons, "for the sake of the bhaktas," *not* specifically for Brahmans and their values. Numerous depictions show Khandoba

with his wife Mhalsa killing the demons, but nowhere is it shown who the particular bhaktas were whom he rescued. The songs of the Vaghyas rarely refer to the story of the seven Rsis or dharmaputras, which admittedly, may not have been the function of the songs.

D. Conclusions

Mallanna could shelter under the umbrella of the ancient cult of Mallikarjuna of Srisailam and thus obtain his legitimization as Siva. Mallikarjuna, however, had and still has a cult which involves worship by people from various quarters, including tribals who have free access to the temple. It is not a monopoly of puranic mythology or of Brahmanical worship. Mailara and Khandoba gained their Brahmanical credentials through the *Mallari Mahatmya* (and other texts like the *Jayadri Mahatmya* and *Martanda Vijaya*)in which Siva becomes an avatara to defend the orthodox-sastric Brahmanical order. It is, however, doubtful how far the *Mahatmya* has become an authoritative scripture for

groups of devotees beyond the immediate addressees. Mahatmyas are not compulsory law which sanction the traditions of a particular cult once and for all and for all devotees. The acceptance of the tradition "codified" by Mahatmyas depends on the degree other groups of devotees are aware of its contents and are persuaded by it. This awareness may spread nowadays more easily and quickly with the increasing literacy and proliferation of printed temple pamphlets (which, however, mostly do *not* or only marginally refer to the Brahmanical features of the *Mahatmya*).Even if devotees know of the existence of the *Mahatmya*,and may or may not know of its contents, acceptance may just amount to lip-service. The focus is still on the folk-religious character of the cult which derives its innate values from its direct accessibility to a god who lives "here and now" and not in some distant puranic heaven. His worship is based on forms of bhakti and tapas which do not necessarily correspond to the codifications of the ninefold bhakti in "classical" bhakti texts. Bhakti and tapas can take violent forms and reflect the attitudes of the hero and ascetic. MMKh are folk cults, but they are more than local village deities (gramadevatas) or caste gods who are normally said to be typical examples of folk religion and only to cater to practical, material wishes of the devotee. The closeness and company of the god, or god as king, in this life or afterlife is one of the ardent wishes of the devotee. In the Khandoba cult it is voiced by the desire expressed in the songs of the Vaghyas: let us go to Jejuri. 71 The wishes of the devotee are often expressed in simple words, not in classical

terminology: I do not want anything. Just remember me and let me be near you. There is no reason to give me anything.

An unwritten principle of the cult is that the god tests the sattva, genuineness of his devotee. The bhakta has to recognize the god in his disguise which is only possible by shedding one's ahamkar. Thus the demon bragging about his riches and mocking at the obscure ascetic on his nandi is nearly doomed. It is his bravery that saves him in his death. Banai suffers the loss of her sheep until she recognizes the god in the old leper.

The position of god also resembles that of the nascent or robber king, or even the king at the imperial center, like Krsnadevaraya of Vijayanagara. The robber king has no (or not yet an) axe to grind as regards varna and impurities. His followers are recruited from all groups without reference to caste and creed. The king at the center may have to pay attention to varna and sastric dharma, but how far is a matter to be examined in each case. Notwithstanding the dharmic-Sastric order he will have to take an "ecumenical" or "secular" attitude towards other castes and religions, e.g., the Muslims. MMKh tend to have the same neutral attitude towards the hierarchy of caste and religion.

The openness to all communities and the earthboundness which is an essential ingredient of folk cults, but results in impurity, exposed the cult to moral censure from various quarters and other religious currents. That Khandoba as an avatara of Siva remains on earth is an anathema to the Puranas. Mostly Siva is represented on earth by Bhairava, Virabhadra or some other partial manifestation who fulfils mundane, impure functions. Most of the devotees would emphasize that Khandoba is a full avatara of Siva/Samkara and not the usual Bhairava. Siva as Khandoba on earth also takes over many attributes and characteristics of the defeated demon, like royal insignia, weapons, and animals, e.g., the horse.

A cult of a god on earth which admits access to all communities and allows violent rituals to be performed besides animal sacrifices in his name (now offered to Banai or the demon), Muralis (devadasis) and so on, always evoked a mixed reaction in old Marathi literature. The quick metamorphosis from an ascetic beggar who rides an old bull and carries an ant-eaten club (khatvanga) to an illustrious king with rich clothes, and a horse with a saddle studded with jewels is "a touchy point not to be disclosed." This is the view of the poet Nirañjanamadhava (d. 1790) in a humorous praise song (stotra) dedicated to Khandoba. 72 Because Khandoba is reputed to be rather fierce and impetuous in his reaction

to those who fail to observe their family duties towards him, and to cause the trouble and affliction characteristic of ghosts, he must be a ghost (bhut). This is the argument of a Christian missionary apparently supported by a Kokanastha Brahman in a discussion with a Desastha Brahman. The discussion took place around 1855. 73

At the end of the nineteenth century a Maharashtrian Brahman on a pilgrimage through India reached Jejuri and remarked with some disdain:

There the Pujaris are Guravs and many of the Sudra caste, etc., come for darsan. Therefore Ragunatha could see that ritual purity and impurity were very little respected. After he had performed the yatra according to family dharma he went to Moresvar (Morgaon) to have darsan of Ganpati.74

Marathi proverbs and expressions emanating from sources outside the cult reflect that the cult could not be ignored, and yet tend to discredit it. The dramatic performance of rituals, the participation in the play (*khel*)of the god, is an important ingredient of folk religion, and very much so in the cult of MMKh. The Marathi term *khelkhandoba* actually refers to the wind of the god possessing the devotee and tossing him around, but it is taken to mean "utter demolition," "devastation," or "destruction." Essentially, the MMKh cult remained then a cult that preserved the identity of Rudra between the classical-puranic Siva who is worshiped in a Brahmanical temple in the form of a linga, and, on the other hand, the Saivite sects such as Kapalikas and Kalamukhas, who became extinct, and their successors the Nathas and Lingayats, though admittedly, it incorporated and shared features of these two other important currents of Hinduism. In fact, we may say that the cult is a mirror of all currents of Hinduism, but it is *folk religion* that is emphasized.75

Notes

1. This paper includes material which was collected during a stay in Maharashtra from August 1984 to April 1985. I am grateful to the German Research Association for financial support. M. L. K. Murty, Deccan College, Pune, has helped me in my field research in Andhra Pradesh and in transcribing and translating oral texts. I received the same help from Dr. Rajaram R. Hegde, Deccan College, Pune, in Karnataka. To both I am most grateful. Data tape-recorded and observed in the field are not specifically documented here. The

reader is referred to a previous article of mine (see n. 47) where further references will be found.

2. S. G. Tulpule, *Marathi Vangmayaca Itihas, khamda pahila* (Pune, 1984), 41 ff.

3. N. Ramesan, *Temples and Legends of Andhra Pradesh* (Bombay, 1962), 12.

4. Tara Parañjpe, "sima pradesatil bhavagamga: stangite," *Pamcadhara* 14 (1981), 22.

5. Richard Burghart, "Hierarchical models of the Hindu social system," *Man* (N.S.) 13 (1978), 519-536.

6. *Pañcavimsa Brahmana* 24.18,2; *BSS* 28.24; Harry Falk, *Bruderschaft und Wirfelspiel* (Freiburg, 1986), 18.

7. *Golla Katha I* (Hyderabad). Told by Voggu Mallesh, Ray Mallesh et al.

8. According to a story told by a Dhangar shepherd, N. K. Mane; the story is at least 137 years old, as it is referred to in the *Jñanoday*,a missionary journal. See G. N. Morje (ed.), *Jñanoday-Lekhan-Sar-Suci* (Bombay, 1986), 459: What was told by the Dhangar with humour and visible relish proves the depravity of the cult from the point of view of the *Jñanoday*.

9. A. K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning* (Princeton, 1981), 115.

10. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*,vol. II, pt. II (Poona, 1941), 1236.

11. Sri Sadguru Bhaumaharaja yamcya samgrahamtil, *Sri Khamdobacim padem* (publ. by V. D. Gokhale, Pune, 1951), *pada* 22 (*Somvatipada*), *pada 19*.

12. Syed Siraj ul Hassan, *The Castes and Tribes of H.E.H. The Nizam's Dominions* (Bombay, 1921), 231.

13. Ra. Ra. Bapurav Khamderav Khade, *Sriksetra Jejuri-mahatmya* (*Pune, 1924*),51. This story is a *verbatim* translation of a passage in the (unpublished) Skt. *Jayadri-Mahatmya*.

14. *Maharashtra State Gazetteers, Satara District* (Rev. Edit., Bombay, 1963), 140, fn. 1.

15. Mukund Wamanrao Burway, *Life of Subhedar Malhar Rao Holkar* (Indore, 1930), 183.

16. *Golla Katha I* (Hyderabad).

17. J. W. Hauer, *Der Vratya* (Stuttgart, 1927), 149.

18. G. D. Sontheimer, "Dasara at Devaragudda. Ritual and Play in the Cult of Mailara/Khandoba," *South Asian Digest of Regional Writing*,10 (1984), 1-20.

19. *Khamdobacim padem*, *pada* 24.

20. I owe this reference to Klaus W. Müller who is working on the *antyestipaddhati* of Narayanabhatta for his Ph.D.

21. Günther D. Sontheimer, "Folk Deities in the Vijayanagara Empire: Narasimha and Mallanna/Mailar," in A. L. Dallapiccola (ed.), *Vijayanagara-City and Empire* (Wiesbaden, 1985), 144 ff., 158. See Upendra Thakur, *The History of Suicide in India* (Delhi, 1963), 61 f. for the devotion between master and servant in the case of Kuvara Laksmana, a general of the Hoysala King Vira Ballala II

(1173-1220), who committed suicide along with his wife and some of his soldiers. The relationship between lord and master, as in the case of MMKh and devotee, is indicated in the inscription: "Between servant and king there was no difference: the glory and the marks of royalty were equal in both." Kuvara Laksmana and his wife became united with Garuda and Laksmi, respectively, suggesting that the Hoysala king was Visnu. This fits well with the notion that for the "hero the king is god."

22. *Sri Khamdobacim padem*,2.

23. Joachim Deppert, *Rudras Geburt*. *Systematische Untersuchungen zum lnzest in der Mythologie der Brahmanas* (Wiesbaden, 1977), 96 f.

24. K. Venkata Ramanayya, *Velugotivarivamsavali* (University of Madras, Madras, 1939), 2.

25. J. W. Hauer, *Der Vratya*,129 f. I could not see the ritual myself, but was told about it by Shri Guru Jayachandra Wodeyar Swamy, who also provided other information about the cult of Mailara.

26. Sontheimer, "Dasara . . . ,"12 and n. 40.

27. Sontheimer, "Dasara . . . ," *passim*.

28. Sontheimer, "Dasara . . . ,"13 ff.

29. Young boys often are the first to discover Khanoba or Mhaskoba or similar gods. They are priests in some temples in the Anantapur District. For the representation of heads of rams and humans alternating under the padukas of Khandoba, see S. Settar and G. D. Sontheimer (eds.), *Memorial Stones* (Dharwad, N. Delhi, 1982), 272 f. (figures 21-23).

30. I am not sure whether the lamb is actually killed nowadays.

31. Falk, *Bruderschaft*,160 ff., 162.

32. Sontheimer, "Folk Deities . . . ", 150 f.

33. Falk, *Bruderschaft*,161.

34. Dharmapuri Venkatayya Pantulu, *Ailoni Mallanna Katha*.(A Compilation from the Golla Katha) (Warangal, 1964) 1 ff. (cited as Golla Katha II); G. R. Varma, *Mailara Deva* (Varman Publications, Tadepalligude, 1973), 38.

35. *Golla Katha I* and *II*;Falk, *Bruderschaft* ...,52; Deppert, *Rudra*,94 ff., 108.

36. Falk, *Bruderschaft* ..., *ibidem*. *Jaiminiya Brahmana* 2.227: agrakama.

37. *Golla Katha I*.According to this oral version it was just a raksasa, but the narrators are sometimes confused about the

sex. It is also a raksasa according to the traditions at Komaravelli: Varma, *Mailara Deva*,38. According to *Golla Katha II*,however, it is a Brahmaraksasi.

38. Varma, *Mailara Deva*,30 ff.

39. *Golla Katha I*.

40. Varma, *Mailara Deva*,30 ff.

41. Sontheimer, *Biroba*, *Mhaskoba und Khandoba*, *Ursprung*, *Geschichte und Umwelt von pastoralen Gottheiten in Maharastra* (Wiesbaden, 1976), 151; *Census of India 1961*,

vol. X, pt. VIII-B, *Fairs and Festivals of Maharashtra* (Bombay, 1969), 190 f.

42. *Golla Katha II*,19 ff.

43. The name of the village Kommarelli or Kommaravelli in Jangav Taluk, Warangal District, has been associated with Kumara (Murukan, Skanda) and his wife Valli. The three heads in front of the murti in the temple of Mallanna may be the three demons Car, Cinkamukan, and Tarakan whom Murukan killed (*Kantapuranam, kandam* 2-4 by Kacciyappa Civacariyar. See Kamil Veith Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* [Wiesbaden 1974], 185 ff.).

44. Sontheimer, *Biroba*,63 ff.

45. *Khandobacim padem*, *pad* 14.

46. Tara Paranjpe, ". . stangite . . .", 22.

47. G. D. Sontheimer, "Rudra and Khandoba: Continuity in Folk Religion," in Milton Israel and N. K. Wagle (eds.), *Religion and Society in Maharashtra*,University of Toronto, Center for South Asian Studies (Toronto, 1987), 1 ff., at 13 ff.

48. Sontheimer, "Rudra," ibid.

49. Vasudeva S. Agrawala, *Ancient Indian Folk Cults* (Varanasi, 1970), Appendix, Nr. 2 and 4.

50. Sontheimer, "Rudra," 14 f.

51. V. B. Kolte (ed.), *Lilacaritra*, *Uttarardha*, *lila* 436 (Mumbai, 1978).

52. Visnukonda Vallabharayadu, *Kridabhiramamu*,v. 145 (Secundarabad: Andhra Pradesh Book Distribution, 1972).

53. *M.Mah*.18.11-13: The syllable *ma* means Sambhu, the syllable *a* Visnu; if these two [gods] are on earth, the word *mela* (ma + a + ila) comes into existence. He is an enemy (arati) to this mela. On account of this word analysis Mallari's name has become Mailara. The syllable *ra* and *la*,it is said, are homophones: from this Mairala comes into existence.

In 18.10 we are told that the murtis of "Sambhu and Martanda Bhairavi are made of clay" (mahimayi), but the traditions that Mailara/Mallanna emerged from a termite mound are omitted.

54. Sontheimer, "Rudra," 19 ff.

55. *Golla Katha 1*.

56. *Golla Katha 1*.

57. H. K. Sherwani, *The Bahmanis of the Deccan* (Hyderabad, 1953), 195; Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1978), 250.

58. G. H. Khare, *Maharastracim car daivatem* (Pune, 1958), *150*. *Epigraphia IndoMoslemica 1921-22*,20.

59. Eaton, *Sufis*,99.

60. Khade, *Jejurimahatmya*,70.

61. Golla Katha I.

62. *Golla Katha II*.

63. According to traditions recorded from Gollas in Sultanabad (Karimnagar District).

64. D. C. Sircar (ed.), *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy for 1957-58* (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1961), 8-9, 21. M. L. K. Murty and Günther D. Sontheimer, "Prehistoric Background to Pastoralism in the Southern Deccan in the Light of Oral Traditions and Cults of Some Pastoral Communities," *Anthropos* 75 (1980), 163-184, 168.

65. Sontheimer, "Rudra," 16 ff.

66. *M.Mah*.14.14; *M.Mah*.(by Cintamani, in Ma., A.D. 1821) 1.23.

67. *M.Mah*.(by Cintamani) 1.97: they called themselves *isvara*.Cp. *M.Mah*.7.27 (by Vinayaka, in Ma., A.D. 1872!): they uprooted svayambhu lingas, destroyed the murtis of other gods, [and] caused their own murtis to be worshiped.

68. David Dean Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton, 1985), 344.

69. Kesav Ranganath Panse, *Panse gharanyaca itihas* (Punem, 1929), 130.

70. Khade, *Jejurimahatmya*,72: Asvatthaman promises to offer the heads of the five Pandavas to Duryodhana. After praising the gatekeeper at the camp of the Pandavas, that is Siva/Tripurahara, he receives a sword from Siva to kill the Pandavas. He enters the camp and beheads five youths who resemble the Pandavas (acc. to *MV* 35.23, Asvatthaman mistakes them for the five Pandavas), offers the heads at the feet of Duryodhana and returns the sword to Siva. This curious version again reminds us of the pañca viras, and the davan of the Dhangars, see *supra*.

71. *Khandobacim padem*, *pada* 21: *cala jaum pahum jejuri* . . . .Whether a particular act of devotion, like bringing water from the river in kavatis (a watervessel and the ritual) and bathing the god, has practical (*bhukti*)or transcendental (*mukti*)results, depends on whether it is practised with *sakama* or *niskama* according to the *MV* 22.34 ff. See also John M. Stanley, "Niskama and Sakama Bhakti: Pandharpur and Jejuri," in Milton Israel and N. K. Wagle (eds.), *Religion*,52-67.

72. L. R. Pamgarkar (ed.), *Nirañjanamadhavamca kavitasamgraha*,pt. 1 (Poona, 1919), 64 ff., 66. See also Ramdas, in Sontheimer, "Rudra," 19.

73. R. C. Dhere, *Khamdoba* (Punem, 1961), 117-119. Referring to Mare Micel, *Khamdobaci gost* (Mumbai, 1855).

74. Ganes Sadasiv Sastri Lele, *Tirthayatra Prabamdha* (Pune, 2nd ed., 1964), 134.

75. Cp. G. D. Sontheimer, "Hinduism: The Five Components and Their Interaction," in G. D. Sontheimer and H. Kulke (eds.), *Hinduism Reconsidered* (in press).

12
Draupadi's Two Guardians: The Buffalo King and the Muslim Devotee

Alf Hiltebeitel

Draupadi is the chief heroine of the *Mahabharata*,the Sanskrit epic which is thought to have been given its classical shape from about 500 B.C. to 400 A.D. She is born from a fire sacrifice as an incarnation of the goddess Sri-Laksmi; marries the five Pandavas; is humiliated and abused after her eldest husband loses her as his last stake in the dice match with his Kaurava cousins; joins her husbands in exile; spurs them to avenge her in battle; joins them in their victorious coronation; shares their kingdom; and finally accompanies them on their final ascent toward heaven. Such, in brief, is her role in the classical epic. On the surface, it is a rather male-defined one, especially when one takes into account that most of the epic action is controlled by the Pandavas' ally Krsna, incarnation of the god Visnu. But Draupadi is also regarded as a goddess, with her own cult centered at the medieval capital of Gingee in northern Tamilnadu. 1 In this context, although it is recalled in her cult's folklore that she is an incarnation of Sri, she is in many ways more a multiform of Durga or Kali, and she is further similar to many "lineage" and "village goddesses" of rural South India. In her cult, her epic roles are deepened and in certain ways transformed, so that the actions of the male heroes now largely revolve around her. But she is still very much the classical epic's heroine. In fact, her festivals are organized around a multi-levelled recreation of the *Mahabharata*.Along with the local epic-related rituals of each village, town, or city temple that holds a festival for her, the cult has its itinerant

specialist performers who are hired for each festival from outside the locality: the *paratiyars* or *parata-piracankis* (*Mahabharata-reciters*)who narrate classical Tamil versions of the epic story, and the terukkuttu dramatists who enact its key episodes in nightlong dramas. It will be necessary to keep these different "performance levels" in mind as we address the subject of this essay: Draupadi's two guardians Pottu Raja and Muttal Ravuttan. The paratiyars, dramatists, and local ritualists often view these two heroes quite differently.

Neither Pottu Raja nor Muttal Ravuttan figures in the classical Sanskrit epic. Yet informants of these different types, all in their own ways, bring each of them into relation with both the *Mahabharata* and the regional mythology of Gingee. Let me introduce these figures through this essay's title. Although Draupadi cult informants do not know it, Pottu Raja means the "Buffalo King." 2 As we shall see, his ritual links can be traced to the South Indian buffalo sacrifice, and his mythic associations to Mahisasura, the "Buffalo Demon" who is the foe and victim of the goddess Durga. One will thus not be misled to expect that the Draupadi cult will link him with scenes and symbols of sacrifice. Meanwhile, the name Muttal Ravuttan derives its second element from a term meaning a Muslim horseman or trooper, and is a common title for Muslims in certain districts of Tamilnadu.3 Yet here again, the meaning of the name is much forgotten and often transformed. Nonetheless, with Muttal Ravuttan one is introduced to the incongruity of a Muslim guardian of a Hindu goddess who is herself the heroine of a pre-Muslim epic.4 In his case, one should also expect to find him linked with symbols of sacrifice and violence, but with the further dimension that he handles them as an "outsider," as one whose position in the cult is that of the periphery, the realm of the "other."

A. Their Icons

The problematic of their relationship is most immediately tangible at the level of the icons which represent them materially at Draupadi temples. I begin with a generalized statement about what may be called the norm, and proceed to two revealing examples that are striking for certain exceptions.

The usual situation is for there to be two icons of Pottu Raja and one of Muttal Ravuttan.5 Both deities will thus have fixed stone icons outside the temple, but only Pottu Raja will have a wooden or metal processional image (utsavavigraha) like those of Draupadi, the Pan-

davas, Krsna, and sometimes other epic heroes and heroines. Pottu Raja's stone and processional images have a certain variety, but they are not essentially different from each other in their iconography. Whether sculpted in the round out of wood or of metal, or in relief on stone, he usually holds a sword or sacrificial knife in his upraised right hand, and either a severed human/demon head or the body of a subdued animal, usually the lion, in his left hand (see plate 36).

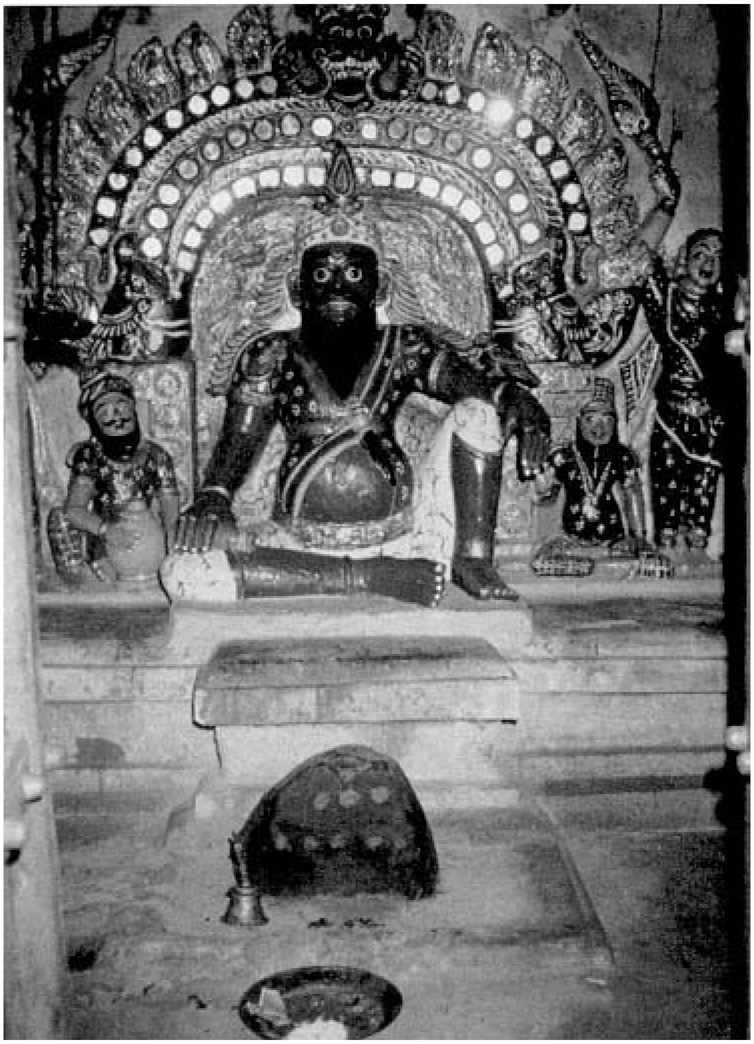
While Muttal Ravuttan has only fixed images, they are iconographically much more more varied. Many temples represent

him "aniconally" or nonanthropomorphically by one or more stones: rectangular slabs, rounded lingam-like shapes, rough-hewn rocks which rise to a point, conical pointed stones that suggest an impalement stake, or even squared off posts surmounted by a tapered button. As we shall see, there are also Draupadi temples where the stake or post-like forms represent Pottu Raja. Sometimes Muttal Ravuttan's stone turns into his own saint's tomb: his dargah (a Muslim term) or samadhi (a Hindu one). In one such case (at Avalurpettai, Tiruvannamalai Taluk, North Arcot) the typical rock slab is projected in outline from the samadhi's southern end; in another (at Kolar, Kolar Taluk, Karnataka) a miniature mosque is outlined around it. Sometimes, however, Muttal Ravuttan also has a full-flowered anthropomorphized iconography. Stone and color-painted plaster images, sometimes in the open air, sometimes in a mandapa, show him seated in an easeful position with one knee (left or right) raised to hold an elbow, the other leg tucked beneath him or forward to overhang his dais; he has a paunch, mustache, turban, beard, and sword; and in some of the large mandapas he has fez-wearing attendants who offer him bottled liquor or potted toddy (see plate 37). He is further attended by animals: most commonly by a "flying" horse, building upon his identity as a Muslim trooper, and in some cases also by dogs and a tiger or lion which sit at his feet, and a parrot which perches on his arm. 6

Most of these iconic features will require further discussion in connection with these two heroes' myths and rituals, but for the moment I turn to a matter of high consistency and great importance that relates their iconographies directly together. No matter whether Muttal Ravuttan is a simple stone, the main figure in a mandapa, or some combination of the two, he is regularly situated in one position: to the northeast of the inner sanctum, and in the ideal case directly to the north of the fixed stone icon of Pottu Raja. Meanwhile, this stone Pottu Raja is invariably set to face directly into the inner sanctum of the temple so that the icon is in the line of sight of Draupadi, the goddess, within.



36. *Pañcaloha* (five metal) processional image of Pottu Raja at the 1986 Draupadi festival in Melacceri, Gingee Taluk, South Arcot, Tamilnadu. The icon rests on Draupadi's "chariot," which it has "led"in procession through the village to the point where the icons can now watch a nightlong Mahabharata drama. Photo by Alf Hiltebeitel.



37. Muttal Ravuttan in his mandapa at Virapanti, Tirukoyilur Taluk, South Arcot District, is represented both aniconically by the stone daubed with *kunkum* in the foreground (behind the offering tray with turmeric powder and a rupee note), and iconically with beard, paunch, emptied liquor bottle in right hand, and attendant with toddy pot to his right. Three large clay horses stand outside the mandapa for him to ride. Photo by Alf Hiltebeitel.

Against this general pattern, let me now note how two temples significantly depart from these norms. The first is the temple at Melacceri (Gingee Taluk, South Arcot), the village known also as "Old Gingee" (*palaiya ceñci*)where, as we shall see in the myths of Pottu Raja, Draupadi is said to have taken her second birth. Here, in an unusual, if not unique

feature (as it is in my fieldwork), Muttal Ravuttan is worshipped in two forms. In one he receives vegetarian offerings, in the other non-vegetarian ones. The former are made to an image of Muttal Ravuttan as a horse-rider (a *ravuttan*)sculpted in relief on a stone plaque that is set beside a similar slab portraying Pottu Raja, who also receives vegetarian offerings. These two slabs stand together in the position usually reserved for Pottu Raja: here under the entrance to a Pottu Raja mandapa, so that Draupadi now looks out at *both* of her guardians from her inner sanctum rather than at Pottu Raja alone (see plate 38). As to the non-vegetarian offerings, these are made at Melacceri to a typical "aniconic" Muttal Ravuttan in his customary position, out of the goddess's line of sight, to the northeast. What is most exceptional about the Melacceri configuration is that Muttal Ravuttan should receive not only his customary non-vegetarian fare in his solitude, but vegetarian offerings beside Pottu Raja. The Melacceri temple thus provides Muttal Ravuttan with a "purified" form to go along with his more commonly found impure one. Notably, the purified form is that of the human horseman, leaving the aniconic rock "detached" and to the side to receive the traditional impure offerings that normally befall him. One may suspect that Muttal Ravuttan has been purified in this exceptional way at Melacceri because it is there, as we shall see, that Draupadi "converts" him to her service. Indeed, the configuration of the icons may at one point have reflected this Gingee mythology.

The second temple is at Kalahasti (Kalahasti Taluk, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh), where again one finds iconographical peculiarities that go deep into Draupadi cult mythology. The essentials were kindly assembled by the Kalahasti temple pujari, who placed the processional icon of Pota Raju (the Telugu form equivalent to Tamil Pottu Raja) on the platform of the fixed Pota Raju so that the two could be photographed together with Muttal Ravuttan (see plate 39). What is unusual here is the design of the stationary Pottu Raja. Coated with turmeric and daubed with red *kunkum*,it is clearly an example of the type of Potu Raja found widely in Andhra Pradesh, where Pota Raju (Telugu spelling) is represented by, and is the name for, the sacrificial post that stands outside temples to village goddesses. 7 Similar post-represen-



38. Fixed stone images of Pottu Raja and Muttal Ravuttan face the inner sanctum of the Melacceri Draupadi temple. Pottu Raja's distinguishable features include a curved knife in his upraised right hand, matted hair, and what looks to be a head dangling from his left hand. Muttal Ravuttan rides a horse and carries a club.
Photo by Alf Hiltebeitel.



39. Pota Raju's wooden processional icon set on the platform of the post-shaped stationary Pota Raju, with "Muhammad Khan"'s tomb to the right. Kalahasti Draupadi temple, Kalahasti Taluk, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh. Photo by Alf Hiltebeitel.

tations of Pottu Raja are not unknown in the Draupadi temples of northern Tamilnadu, 8 but they are highly exceptional and strikingly different from the far more common iconic Pottu Rajas in bas relief on stone slabs. So the Pota Raju post at Kalahasti can be identified as a transitional type. Draupadi is not a "village goddess" at Kalahasti, nor is she one in Tamilnadu. She is more a lineage goddess, linked with lineages within specific castes (mainly Vanniyars in Tamilnadu, Vanne Reddis at Kalahasti). This will help to explain certain major differences between Draupadi's Pottu Raja, and the Pota Raju of Andhra village goddesses: differences which will be observed when I discuss the place of our two heroes in Draupadi cult ritual. Moreover, Pota Raju's mythology at Kalahasti is a precise and easily recognized conflation of the mythology that connects him on the one hand with village goddesses in Andhra Pradesh and the mythology that connects him on the other with Draupadi in Tamilnadu. Although he does of course serve Draupadi in her temple, according to the pujari he is also the younger brother of the Seven Saktis: "Poleramma, Ankalamma, etc.," a group in which the pujari did not, let us note, include Draupadi. This group goes more commonly in Andhra by the name of the "Seven Sisters," the village goddesses with whom Pota Raju is repeatedly connected in Andhra myth and ritual.9 In the Draupadi cult within Tamilnadu, Pottu Raja has no sisters whatsoever, although we shall see that he does retain a "junior brother" status relative to Draupadi by his marriage to the Pandavas' younger sister Cankuvati, another Draupadi cult folk creation. Meanwhile, this same Kalahasti Pota Raju, a brahmacarin or celibate, became a "disciple" (*sisya*)of Dharma-Yudhisthira, Draupadi's eldest husband. Pota Raju's father, named Maharsi, was the guru of the Kauravas, and had some sacred books of astrology with which he would be able to fix the date of the Mahabharata war in a way that would favor the Kauravas. At the behest of Krsna and Sahadeva, the youngest Pandava who is reputed in South Indian epic folklore to have been an astrologer himself, Pota Raju went and requested the books from his father, and when the latter refused to yield them, Pota Raju cut off his father's head. This is then the head which Pota Raju's processional icon still holds at Kalahasti. Meanwhile, where one expects to find Muttal Ravuttan in this Kalahasti configuration, one is not disappointed. But his name has been forgotten. Just north of the fixed Pota Raju post, and almost adjacent to it, is the samadhi or *ghori* (said to be a "Hindustani word" for a tomb) of Muhammad Khan. One is told that he was a Muslim devotee of Draupadi who died here, and had no connection with the Mahabharata war. But he was also a "second

disciple" of Dharma-Yudhisthira. These Telugu stories of Pota Raju and "Muttal Ravuttan" are alleven including the forgetting of the latter's namefragments of the Draupadi cult's Tamil mythology, which we must now turn to more closely. For the moment I will just note two things. First, it is no accident that Pota Raju has a transitional mythology in Kalahasti. The Tamil Draupadi cult clearly marks a southern extension of Pota Raju's diffusion, which would seem to have its origin and center in Andhra Pradesh. And second, it is no accident that both Pota Raju and Muhammad Khan, alias Muttal Ravuttan, are "disciples of Dharma." For in the Draupadi cult, Dharma-Yudhisthira is the incarnation of Dharmaraja Yama, the god of death: death being the very function which our two guardians must each in his own way oversee for Draupadi the goddess.

B. Their Double Mythologies

Draupadi cult mythology sometimes links Pottu Raja and Muttal Ravuttan variously together, and sometimes treats them separately. I will apporach the links between them, however, from a structural perspective that is not made explicit in the myths themselves, but is implicit within the cult's mythology as a whole. This implicit structure is the mirror relation between Draupadi's Gingee mythology and her epic mythology, something already hinted at in the mythic fragments just cited. It is, in fact, precisely in the mythologies of Draupadi's two guardians that this mirroring structure is given its most fundamental articulation. Not surprisingly, the "folk cult" reveals this underlying structure through two "folk deities."

What this means is that Pottu Raja and Muttal Ravuttan each have both a Gingee mythology and an epic mythology, and that in each case the two mythologies replicate each other's most decisive features. To make this point as simply as possible, I must thus summarize four myths, keeping discussion of sources and variants to the bare essentials. I turn first to Pottu Raja, beginning with a sort of consensual summary of his mythology of Gingee.

> In ancient times there was a descendant of the Pandavas named king Cunitan, whose kingdom was being ravaged by a demon, usually named Acalamman or Acalammacuran. The demon was himself a descendent of the demon Baka, who was killed by Bhima, the Pandava strong man, in the *Mahabharata*.Acalamman had vowed to destroy Cunitan and his kingdom in revenge, and had obtained a boon which made him virtually in-

> vulnerable: with a hundred, or more rarely a thousand, heads, he could not be killed, for even if ninety-nine were cut off, the hundredth could not be severed. If it fell and touched the ground, the person who severed it would die.
>
> In dire distress, king Cunitan learned from his advisors that only Draupadithe supreme Sakticould cut the demon's heads, and ordered the performance of a fire sacrifice to bring herhis ancestressforth for a second birth. In most versions this second birth took place at Gingee, and more particularly at the Melacceri Draupadi temple. And this is so either because King Cunitan had all along been the king of Gingee (the usual version), or because he had come to Gingee from the traditional North Indian epic capital of Hastinapura to look for the rsis who could perform his sacrifice. Moreover, the Melacceri Draupadi temple abuts on a jungly mountainous terrain called the Melacceri Forest (katu), which either was all along, or became after Cunitan's migration to the south, the demon's base of operations.
>
> When Draupadi rose from the fire, she agreed to protect Cunitan and their common lineage, but she was perplexed at what to do about the demon's last head. Then, however, she thought of Pottu Raja, and sent Cunitan to bring him to her. When Draupadi and Pottu Raja finally joined forces, they had a full complement of cultic implements and sacrificial weapons. These are variously enumerated, but most commonly include the *virapampai* (heroic *pampai* drum), *virakantakam* (heroic turmeric powder), *virakuntam* (heroic lance, also called *cula* [Sanskrit sula], trident, but usually with five tines), and *viracatti* (heroic whip). These were either born with Draupadi when she rose from the fire, or they were originally the property of Pottu Raja, who brought them with him as he entered her service. They are both cultic implements, and the weapons used to kill the many-headed demon.
>
> When Draupadi and Pottu Raja at last confronted Acalamman, the demon taunted Draupadi with his

invulnerability. But without saying anything Draupadi cut off all his heads, and Pottu Raja caught the last one, thus preventing it from touching the ground. After this Pottu Raja vowed that he would always hold the head in his left hand, thus protecting Draupadi, the Gingee kingdom, and all Draupadi temples beginning with the Melacceri temple which King Cunitan would build on the spot of Draupadi's Gingee birth, or, according to others, the spot at which she disappeared immediately after killing the demon. Images of Pottu Raja perpetually holding a head in his hand thus show him fulfilling this mission.

In the Draupadi cult, and particularly at Draupadi festivals, Pottu

Raja's Gingee mythology is narrated primarily by the paratiyars. The terukkuttu dramatists know it, and the troupe I knew best, aware of my interest in such stories, even improvised a play to portray it. But it is not part of their festival repertoire of dramas. Now the paratiyars, professional reciters of classical Tamil versions of the *Mahabharata* (most commonly the *Makaparatam* of Villiputtur Alvar), embody a classical tradition of epic expertise. They are accorded a certain deference within the cult for their prestigious literary knowledge. Moreover, as individuals they are usually of at least equal and often higher caste rank (some being Aiyar Brahmans or Velalars) than the main population of the cult (usually Vanniyars), from which the terukkuttu actors are usually drawn. In contrast to the classical and literary prestige of the paratiyars, the dramatists are viewed as presenting a popular and essentially non-literary or oral tradition.

It is important to insist that these distinctions between high and low, classical and popular, and text and oral are by no means absolute. Indeed, it is the large common ground in which they overlap, mutually influence, and mirror each other that is the main concern of this section. But they do have direct bearing on the two mythologies of Pottu Raja. One thing which the paratiyars clearly achieve in espousing the Cunitan cycle is a story that links Pottu Raja with Draupadi without bringing him directly into the classical epic story. This they know too well to allow such an intrusion, and several paratiyars spoke with disdain of the stories which do link Pottu Rajaand sometimes Muttal Ravuttanwith the epic's main action. In fact, two paratiyars were met who eliminated Gingee from the myth just discussed, and told instead that king Cunitan ruled and remained in North India, and that his sacrifice, and Draupadi and Pottu Raja's defeat of the demon, took place in the Himalayas. Indeed, one of these two paratiyars identified Cunitan's North Indian kingdom as Kausambi, a detail which he seemed at the time to have pulled out of a hat, but which I was soon astonished to be able to trace to numerous Sanskrit Puranas, where one can learn that the Pandavas' descendants moved their capital to Kausambi after the flooding of their prior capital of Hastinapura, and that the Tamil name Cunitan derives from one of those very descendants, whose Sanskrit form is Sunitha. Such classical and antiquarian precision represents one pole toward which the paratiyar versions may tend, a pole directly opposite the more popularly oriented mythology of the dramatists. For the dramatists show no restraint in involving Pottu Raja directly in the *Mahabharata's* main action, and most drama troupes include in their repertoires a play which does so. Turning now to Pottu Raja's

epic mythology, it is this drama that supplies our main source. In these stories Pottu Raja is usually called Pormannan, "War King," a *nom de guerre* that defines the Mahabharata war as the venue in which he will play his main "folk epic" role.

That the dramatists should be unrestrained in linking Pottu Raja with the *Mahabharata* is not surprising, since they are hired at Draupadi festivals to present plays in a Mahabharata cycle. More than this, however, it is the dramatists who negotiate the mythological middle ground between the classicism of the paratiyars and the popular, and in many cases ritually inspired, mythology of local Draupadi temples. One will thus also find the Pormannan story in local temple variants, especially outside the area frequented by today's drama troupes. The drama's short title is "Pormannan's Fight." There is a chapbook edition of the play 10 which, like other publications of terukkuttu dramas, was probably inspired by prior oral versions and palm leaf manuscripts. Actual performances basically keep to the story as one finds it in the chapbook, but with much improvisation, frequent departures, and variation from troupe to troupe. My summary will keep these factors in mind.

The play opens with the Pandavas at a place called Nutanapuri, the "New" or "Extraordinary City," seemingly a

new name for the city in which they reside after their forest exile and period of concealment to await the outcome of the negotiations that will determine whether there will be a Mahabharata war. Krsna joins them there, and tells them that Draupadi cannot win the forthcoming eighteen day war unless she is supplied with five items: again variously named, but including, as above, the heroic whip, heroic pampai drum, heroic turmeric powder, heroic lance, and also the pucari's turmeric box (*pantara petti*).Note that while dramatists, like local temple pucaris who sometimes know this story, prominently mention the pantara petti, the paratiyars did not: one of a number of indications that the dramas are closer to the ritual idioms of the temples. These five items, says Krsna, now belong to Pormannan in Civanantapuri, "The City of the Bliss of Siva." And he divulges how they can be obtained, setting in motion the elaborate scheme that unfolds for the rest of the play.

Pormannan is introduced doing a puja with the coveted articles. He is portrayed with "demonic" facial make-up (red coloring with white dots, large moustache) and gestures (protuding tongue, bulging eyes, bellowing sounds, menacing movements), which he comically displays before introducing himself, his city, and his genealogy. He mentions his patrilineal

descent through four generations, all the names ending in the suffix *lingam*,his father variously called Sivalingam and Gurulingam. As to his city, it has seven forts, and because he keeps the five puja instruments, it is impenetrable. And anyone who enters his fort to take them will die.

Now Bhima, at Krsna's direction, approaches the city disguised as a woodseller. (Here, to explain what follows, Krsna would seem to know a background myth that has not surfaced in any of the dramas: the city was created when Parvati once took up a piece of wood and drew its design. Siva then decreed that as wood created it, so it would destroy it.) 11 When Pormannan calls Bhima before him, he allows Bhima to rest the logs against the outer fort wall. Represented by a curtain held by two actors, the wall drops to the ground. Pormannan is furious, and orders Bhima imprisoned, which Bhima allows as it is part of Krsna's scheme.

Now Krsna and Arjuna come to the rescue, each in woman's guise. Arjuna appears as a beautiful young woman of sixteen named Vijayampal, a name which disguises one of his own names, Vijaya or "Victory," and openly evokes the goddess Durga for whom Vijaya is a familiar epithet and Ampal a term for woman, mother, or goddess. Meanwhile, Krsna is a decrepit hundred year old crone or "grandmother" (patti), claiming to be Vijayampal's mother. When they reach Civanantapuri, they announce that they are the woodseller's mother and sister and mourn his loss. Pormannan orders them brought before him. Smitten with immediate lust for Vijayampal, he fails to register the incongruity of their ages. Falling over the old woman, sticking his tongue in and out, he keeps up a mad chase until finally he says he wants to marry Vijayampal and will do anything to have her. First the old lady says she will give him her daughter if she gets her son back, and Pormannan complies. And then the old lady, Krsna, asks for the puja articles so she can perform a Sivapuja. With considerable fanfare, as this is one of the play's central moments, Pormannan hands them over to Vijayampal. The grandmother then says she must go outside the city to perform the rite, and over Pormannan's salacious protests, takes Vijayampal with her on the promise that they will soon return for the wedding. Furthermore, catching Pormannan at his most lovelorn and dimwitted, the old lady now insists that he promise, according to the chapbook version, that if they do *not* return within about one-and-a-half hours, Pormannan will destroy his city, plough it to dust, make the earth even, and sow it with castor and cotton. Moreover, in the performed version of the troupe I knew best, a version known also at various local temples, she (Krsna, the old lady) also makes Pormannan promise to cut off his father's head; for Pormannan's father, an ardent Siva bhakta, would protest the release of the five implements and not

allow his son to aid the Pandavas or come to the war. Only after Pormannan has met these conditions can he come searching for Vijayampal. It is of course this fragment of the whole that we met above in a much transformed variant at Kalahasti, where Krsna gets Pottu Raja (not Pormannan) to kill his father in order to secure for the Pandavas the knowledge of when to begin the Mahabharata war. 12

> Krsna and Arjuna now go back to Nutanapuri, shed their female guises, and rejoice with Draupadi and the other Pandavas in the weapons that will allow Draupadi to win the eighteen day war. Meanwhile, the abject Pormannan destroys his fort, sows castor and cotton, and in my primary troupe's version, kills his father. When he arrives at Nutanapuri, he dances and postures like an iconic Pottu Raja, holding an upraised sword in his right hand and a wadded ball of white cloth-his father's head-in his left. But he has of course the rude awakening that his bride-to-be is a man. Undaunted, he says that if he was promised a wife he must get one, and Krsna tells the Pandavas to give him their younger sister Cankuvati. Let us note that this was the point at which one of the pucaris (the Tindivanam Draupadi temple priest) who knew a version of this story paused to explain why Pormannan must continue to hold the head: Krsna told him to keep holding it while the Mahabharata war was in progress, and not to drop it lest it destroy the world if it touched the ground; thus he should not be hasty about marrying Cankuvati. But in the play Pormannan finally sets the "head" aside, and Cankuvati is sent for. Seeing her, Pormannan quickly redirects his affections. Krsna then insists on one condition for the marriage: that Pormannan agree to serve as leader of the Pandavas' army in the eighteen day war. Here at last Pormannan insists on his own bargain in return. He will lead the Pandava army, but Krsna must supply him with three things: a mound of ponkal like a mountain, a flour-lamp like a hill, and a he-goat as tall as a palm tree. Krsna supplies these with various tricks, ordering the ponkal put on a mountain, the goat put on a palm tree, and the flour lamp put on a tamarind tree to make the objects as big as demanded. Indeed, in a second troupe's performed version which omits the episode of the father's head, Krsna gives Pormannan a live cock "instead of the goat," and Pormannan bites its neck in half on the stage and then raises its severed head with his right hand while holding its carcass lowered in his left. Disappointed with all these substitutes, but reluctantly satisfied, Pormannan contents himself with Cankuvati, bringing the play and the story to a happy ending.

Now it is clear that the Gingee mythology of Pottu Raja and the epic mythology of Pormannan tell strikingly different stories. Indeed,

in the first the primary action focuses on the protection of a kingdom, while the latter focuses on a kingdom's destruction. From this angle, both could be studied in relation to other stories of these two different types. But what is more striking is that despite the narrative differences, the two myths mirror each other's most decisive features. The following chart demonstrates this in brief compass. Keep in mind that where I summarize the *Mahabharata*,I do so as it is known in Draupadi cult circles.

Pottu Raja at Gingee	*Pormannan in the* Mahabharata
1. Marginal forest setting, between the kingdom of Gingee and the Melacceri Forest.	1. Marginal forest setting, between forest exile and the war over the kingdom.
2. The weak, exiled king, a descendant of the Pandavas, cannot defeat a hundred-headed demon; only Draupadi can defeat him, with the aid of Pottu Raja.	2. The weak, exiled Pandavas cannot defeat the hundred Kauravas, demons incarnate (= a hundred heads); it will be Draupadi who will win the war and Pormannan who will lead the army.
3. The five ritual weapons used to defeat the demon are either born with Draupadi or brought by Pottu Raja.	3. The five ritual weapons that Draupadi needs to win the war are secured, through trickery, from Pormannan.
4. Pottu Raja must hold the demon's last, central head.	4. Pormannan is tricked not only into bringing the weapons, but his father's head.

There are other complementarities as well, but only one need detain us. While the Gingee myths retain the name Pottu Raja, with its unrecognized and apparently forgotten meaning of "Buffalo King" (see n. 2), the Pormannan myth has as its unmistakeable subtext the myth of the *mahisasuramardana*:the "Killing of the Buffalo Demon" (Mahisasura) by the goddess Durga. For not only is Arjuna a Durga multiform. He himself is Draupadi's surrogate on the mission to Pormannan's kingdom, a mission which reanimates one of the perennial themes in the mythology of the goddess and the Buffalo Demon: the goddess's seduction of the demon to draw him into battle. If, as Biardeau has so persuasively and insightfully argued, Pottu Raja is ultimately

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"identical with Mahisasura, but with a Mahisasura who has been converted" 13 by his death at Durga's hands, one can see how both of his myths devolve from such a premise. Indeed, among guardian deities Pottu Raja is the perfect type of the "demon devotee." In the Gingee myth, he is the already converted demon, brought into the service of Draupadi as he is into the service of various Andhra village goddesses, one and all, like Draupadi, multiforms of Durga. And as the "War King," we get a glimpse of him as a multiform of the Buffalo Demon himself, seduced by the goddess into engaging her in battle, and implicitly defeated in the yielding of his weapons. Yet Pormannan never fights the goddess. So far as his myth goes, his combative traits are first deflected against his kingdom and his father, and then, more in parallel with Pottu Raja's service to Draupadi at Gingee, channelled into his leadership of the Pandava army. Once defeated as Mahisa, he now helps the goddess combat other demons not unlike his former self.

Turning now to the mythology of Muttal Ravuttan, the situation is far more diffuse. At local temples, the little stones which usually represent him are often not, or are no longer, mythologized at all. Sometimes informants would look embarassed when asked about them, and then admit surprise if it came up that he was a Muslim. Sometimes they would know that he was a Muslim, but had no recollection of his name. Or, as at Kalahasti, a more generalized Muslim name would be supplied. And for some his Muslim identity had been eclipsed by a Hindu one, with ravuttan replaced by raja, making him a Hindu king, or in the case of the paratiyar who linked king Cunitan with Kausambi the claim that *raut* is a name for North Indian Brahmans! In fact, no other feature of Draupadi cult mythology is more fragmented and obscure. Unlike the mythology of Pottu Raja, of which something is known at virtually all levels of Draupadi cult involvement, myths of Muttal Ravuttan are told only by a scattered few.

Once again, however, the variants organize themselves into two groups: those which connect him with Gingee, and those which connect him with the *Mahabharata*.My best sources on both were the two terukkuttu actors who led the troupe whose Pormannan holds his father's head. They observed that Muttal Ravuttan's Gingee myth was the least known, and to be found at only a few local temples, while his Mahabharata story had only slightly wider circulation, primarily through a terukkuttu drama which they did indeed know, but had only been asked to perform once (that is, before I requested them to do it again). I have found nothing to contradict this comparative judgment about the two stories. Be it noted, however, that whereas Pottu Raja's

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Gingee mythology is transmitted primarily from the repertoire of the paratiyars, Muttal Ravuttan's is to be found elsewhere. For while some paratiyars do link Muttal Ravuttan with the myths about King Cunitan and Pottu Raja, he is never more than the latter's tag-along in such accounts. Thus, in both North Indian and Gingee variants, he may be Pottu Raja's "friend," with both of them serving Cunitan as army leaders and ministers (*mantrins*,in the one case noted, a Brahman). But he is never given a role of his own in this myth, which is clearly first, foremost, and most essentially a myth about Pottu Raja. Moreover, other paratiyars who tell the Pottu Raja-Cunitan myth eschew Muttal Ravuttan entirely, saying that he has nothing to do with that story, and moreover that he "spoils" the *Mahabharata* and is a mere popular fiction. The Gingee myth *distinctive* to Muttal Ravuttan thus has no place at this learned level. Let us now turn to the account which the two dramatists claimed to have heard so infrequently in the course of their visits to local Draupadi temples.

> Muttal Ravuttan was born in Gingee. One night he had a dream in which Draupadi-amman told him that she would give him whatever he desired if he would sacrifice a pregnant woman to her. Muttal Ravuttan had a pregnant younger sister named Pal Varicai (Row of Teeth). He readied her for sacrifice, but Draupadi stopped

him, thinking: "She is a woman like me." She praised Muttal Ravuttan's dedication, however, and told him that she would still grant him a boon. Whatever he thought of would be done; but he must give up his religion and come serve at her residence (i.e., her temple): "Serving at my feet, you can live with me." Muttal Ravuttan thus gave up his religion and came to serve Draupadi. Henceforth it was agreed that she would receive pure offerings of milk, flowers, vegetables, and fruits. And he would receive live sacrifices (*uyirinankal paliyitutal*;i.e., blood sacrifices) such as cocks, goats, and even humans.

The ritual ambiance and local temple provenance of this story are unmistakable. It is clearly concerned with themes of sacrificial violence, and in particular with inversions of what normally acceptable sacrificial violence would entail. For Muttal Ravuttan agrees to sacrifice not only a woman (regular sacrificial victims are males), and not only his younger sister, but his pregnant younger sister. Nothing like this ever went on in the Gingee of King Cunitan and Pottu Raja. Clearly Muttal Ravuttan's myth and sacrificial propensities are of a different shading from those of his cohort. For light on this distinction, one must turn to some background ethnology.

If the mythology of Pottu Raja, alias Mahisasura, reveals him as a

perfect type of the "demon devotee," the Gingee mythology of Muttal Ravuttan finds its closest analogues in stories of the type which M. Arunachalam wrote about under the inspired heading of "ballads glorifying criminals." 14 His main examples are in fact Kattavarayan, Maturai Viran, and Cutalai Matan. For present purposes, one may call this second type that of the "criminal god," although it is important to note that the two types need not always be distinct, as in the case of Kattavarayan who seems not only to have his "criminal" career but to be a converted form of the demon Kartavirya Arjuna.15 The closest of these figures to Muttal Ravuttan, however, is Cutalai Matan, a "guardian" deity for various gods and goddesses popular in southern parts of Tamilnadu. Indeed, his myth sheds considerable light on some of the more baffling themes and missing connections in our all too brief myth of Muttal Ravuttan. Both are *mantiravatis* (Sanskrit *mantravadi*):that is, "mantra-speakers" or magicians, and in particular black magicians, a trait of Muttal Ravuttan's that my informants will make explicit in their version of his epic mythology. More than this, Cutalai Matan shares the telling trait of a predilection for sacrifices of pregnant females. In a contest with another mantravadi in Kerala, he seduces or rapes the opponent's daughter; makes her pregnant by a subterfuge; gets the adversary to offer him a pregnant goat, pregnant sow, and a young girl pregnant for the first time (apparently the same one he had made pregnant himself), and finally arranges for the opponent's own sacrifice by getting the king of the country to have him buried up to his neck and trampled by the royal elephants.16 These Tamil myths linking mantravadis with the sacrifice of pregnant females surely reflect and derive from actual mantravadi practices of Kerala.17 The cult of *oti*,"breaking the human body," called for an initiation in which the novice would mesmerize a pregnant woman into leaving her house at the dead of night, get her to lie down naked, extract the embryo from her womb into a gourd, cut it up, substitute another substance for it, consume flesh and liquor, and learn to prepare from "the sixth or seventh month's foetus of a primapara" a potent medicinal substance called *pilla thilam* or "baby oil" by mixing the liquid (thilam) with fine powder from a human skull.18

These mantravadi myths clearly portray "criminal gods" of an extreme type. Yet one should observe that both result in the termination of the odious sacrifices when the mantravadi is subdued. Cutalai Matan actually gets his adversary to perform the various sacrifices on his behalf, and then turns to a more ordinary "criminal" career before finally subordinating himself to the higher Hindu gods as a

recipient of blood sacrifices. 19 And Muttal Ravuttan, after he has apparently been tested by Draupadi in the dream that nearly brings him to sacrifice his pregnant younger sister, is told not to perform this rite before he "converts" to Draupadi's service as the guardian who accepts animal "and human" offerings. He thus gives up his mantravadi ways and his Muslim religion, but at the same time retains such traits, turning his "meat-eating" religion and his magical gifts to the advantage of the "purer" Hindu deity whose grace now extends, in return, to include Muslims.

Turning now to Muttal Ravuttan's epic mythology, one may observe that his Gingee myth leaves many open questions.

How is it that Muttal Ravuttan's younger sister, this "Row of Teeth," comes to be pregnant? One hears of no husband. And how is Muttal Ravuttan so easily subdued and converted by Draupadi-amman? In the Cutalai Matan myth the impregnation and the subjugation of the sacrificing mantravadi are accounted for, in effect, by Cutalai Matan himself. Does Draupadi have someone "similar" to subjugate Muttal Ravuttan and to impregnate his sister? Not quite. But she does have someone to subjugate him: Pormannan. And, rather than impregnate his sister, she has someone to marry his daughter: Pormannan's son Allimuttu. Muttal Ravuttan's main epic myth thus *sequentially* presupposes the epic myth of Pottu Raja under his alias Pormannan. But more than this, it is in such transformations as these that one can now see how Muttal Ravuttan's epic mythology (for it is more than just one myth) is still a complex refraction, purified of its most nefarious mantravadi elements, of his *own* Gingee myth, and notthe point to emphasizeof the Gingee myth of Pottu Raja.

The relation between Muttal Ravuttan and Pormannan is actually highlighted in the play's title: "The Marriage of Allimuttu and Mallika, called the Pormannan-Muttal Ravuttan Combat" (*Allimuttu Mallika Tirumanam ennum Pormannan-Muttalravuttan Cantai*).20Indeed, the play begins where "Pormannan Cantai" left off: Pormannan and Cankuvati are now parents, and their son Allimuttu has had time to grow up in the indefinite post-war period. The account follows a performance staged at my request by the troupe led by my two chief dramatist informants.

> First on stage, Muttal Ravuttan sings of himself boastfully as a great mantravadi, and tells that he has created his daughter Mallika through the power of his mantras. Then Mallika enters and boasts further of her father's powers before he sends her to a forest garden to gather flowers. Next Cankuvati is introduced, calling for her son

> Allimuttu, and Allimuttu arrives to tell her that he is going to the forest to hunt. When he sees Mallika, it is another antic romp of love at first sight followed by a comically abrupt proposal of marriage. Mallika is receptive, but says her father won't allow her to marry anyone. Moreover, he is a Muslim and a great mantravadi, able to do whatever he wishes, and he has the boon that he cannot be defeated or killed by anyone born through a womb. Only if he is subdued (atakku) can they wed. Allimuttu, undaunted, tells her his maternal uncles, the Pandavas, will solve his problem. He goes to Dharma, and Dharma calls his brothers and Allimuttu together to subdue Muttal Ravuttan. But Muttal Ravuttan's mantras deprive them of all their strength, and he takes them off to prison. Once again, Krsna comes to the rescue. He praises the Pandavas for challenging Muttal Ravuttan. But he says they can only be freed, and Muttal Ravuttan subdued, if Draupadiborn from fire rather than a wombjoins with Pormannan to defeat him. Draupadi then sends Pormannan to fight Muttal Ravuttan. But when he approaches, Muttal Ravuttan asks him, "Who is your mother?" Pormannan says his mother is "the uniquely chaste lady Draupadi" (*ekappattini turopatai*),apparently confirming that his own birth is also non-uterine. He then adds that he bears the five cultic weapons that, in his own myths, had served him and Draupadi in their victories at Gingee and in the Mahabharata war. Muttal Ravuttan recognizes immediately that his mantras are futile against such an arsenal, declares himself ready to be Pormannan's slave (*atimai*),and asks for refuge (*caranakati*)at Draupadi's feet. Draupadi accepts his submission and says he can henceforth sit at the north side of her residence or temple (*alayam*),and be ready to fight for her at all times. And she tells him, in the closing scene, to let his daughter Mallika marry Allimuttu.

Needless to say, the two terukkuttu plays share many themes and a common structure. But their mythical subtexts are remarkably different: in one case the myth of Durga and the Buffalo Demon, in the other the lore of mantravadis. It is the latter which we must now pursue further in its varied epic guise.

Acutally this is not Muttal Ravuttan's only epic myth. Local informants at Draupadi temples also know a number of more fragmented stories that connect him with the *Mahabharata*.Thus one claimed that he performed an eighteen day puja to help the Pandavas at Kuruksetra; one that he and Pottu Raja were friends and both generals who fought there for the Pandavas (rather than for king Cunitan); several that he drove Pottu Raja's war chariot; and another, noted from Kalahasti, that he and Pottu Raja were Dharma's disciples. In fact, a connection

with Dharma undergoes a revealing elaboration in a temple variant from Chinna Salem (Kallakuruchi Taluk, South

Arcot), one which also seems to be a multiform of the terukkuttu story. In this account, Muttal Ravuttan was the Muslim field general of a Hindu king named Muttala Maharaja of the North Indian kingdom of Muttalappuram who came over to serve the Pandavas when the king married his daughter Muttalakkanni to Dharma. Muttal Ravuttan did this because he had always been devoted to Muttalakkanni, and wanted to serve her until his death. So he also served the Pandavas as the guardian of the northern gate of their palace. Here, instead of just one "Muttala," there are three: the girl, the Muslim field general, and the Hindu king. Moreover, it would seem that Muttal Ravuttan's own mythology has been split: In one aspect, he is still the Muslim field general who comes to serve Draupadi and guard her northern gate; and in the other, he remains the father of the girl whose marriage into the Pandava family secures his "Muslim" service to Draupadi, but as the father he is now a Hindu king. One is reminded how his icons are often given a Hindu name. In the case of the Chinna Salem myth, the split solves the problem of how the Pandavas or their descendants could intermarry with Muslims: Allimuttu marries Muttal Ravuttan's Muslim daughter; Dharma marries Muttala Maharaja's Hindu daughter. And in the case of the icons, the occasional Hindu identity solves the incongruity of Draupadi having a Muslim guardian.

But most telling in terms of tracing the affinities between Muttal Ravuttan's Gingee and Mahabharata myths are his various dealings with young girls. For once again, one finds him in another strange attachment of this type: this time his lifelong devotion to the Hindu princess Muttalakkanni. One may now note further that even in the terukkuttu drama, Muttal Ravuttan holds his daughter, whom he has created by his mantras, in a kind of magical enthrallment. All of these variants preserve and present different legacies of his mythology as a mantravadi. In the Gingee and terukkuttu myths, it is ultimately Draupadi who rescues the girl from her enthrallment. And in the Chinna Salem myth it is the girl's marriage to Dharma which attenuates it. Moreover, in either case, whether it be by Draupadi or Dharma, the freeing of the girl as the occasion of his dedication to the Pandavas implies Muttal Ravuttan's "conversion," since the other name for a Draupadi temple is a Dharmaraja temple. And whether it be as a result of his conversion at Gingee or his conversion within the *Mahabharata*,one finds Muttal Ravuttan in the same iconic, mythic, and ritual position: accepting his submission "at Draupadi's feet," and beginning

his service as the guardian of the northern gate of her residence-palace-temple. Let us now recall the relative position of Pottu Raja, and rethink our findings in relation to the ritual rapport between the two of them.

C. Their Ritual Roles: Hierarchy, Boundaries, Transgressions, and Sacrifice

The contrast between Pottu Raja and Muttal Ravuttan is rarely better expressed than in the positions which they assume vis à vis the goddess at the ends of their myths. Hierarchically, whereas Muttal Ravuttan accepts service at Draupadi's feet, Pottu Raja stands directly before her eyes. In one case they are head-to-foot, in the other eye-to-eye and thus head-to-head. Within the Indian symbolic lexicon these are clearly expressions of hierarchy. But they are also expressions of bhakti: the first a gesture of submission or taking refuge, the latter of viewing the deity or taking darsan. Furthermore, whereas Muttal Ravuttan guards the Draupadi temple's northern gate, Pottu Raja is posted before the entrance to her inner sanctum. Here one is dealing not so much with hierarchy (and verticality) as with horizontal spatial boundaries. Yet while their myths tell how both Pottu Raja and Muttal Ravuttan finally come to be *fixed* in these positions, they also build up to these conclusions by showing how each, before reaching his appointed station, begins as a transgressor of hierarchies and boundaries. This is most striking, in terms of hierarchy, in the caste-transgressing implications of their multiple caste affinities. Within the Draupadi cult Pottu Raja (or Pormannan) is usually regarded as either a Brahman (or brahmacarin, as at Kalahasti) or Ksatriya, but his low status and servant roles clearly stem from the same set of associations that result in his being impersonated by Untouchables in parts of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Maharashtra. 21 And Muttal Ravuttan is sometimes a Brahman, sometimes a Hindu King of slightly changed name, and usually a non-caste Muslim. Muttal Ravuttan is also regarded as having transgressed spatial boundaries as a representative of the incursion of Islam from North into South India. Indeed, he is sometimes said to have been positioned at Draupadi's northern gate to guard against further Islamic penetration. More than this, nothing yet has been said about the major transgressive themes of their myths: for Pottu Raja, holding a severed headin some versions his own father'sunto eternity; and for Muttal Ravuttan, holding young girlsin some cases his daughter or sisterin various forms of enthrallment, with varying implications of aborticide. The conclusion of

this essay will examine such matters as these against the background of the further contrastive roles of these two guardians in the realm of Draupadi cult ritual.

I have already described the positions of their stationary icons, and the contrastive vegetarian and non-vegetarian types of offerings these usually receive (Melacceri excepted). And I have further observed that of the two, only Pottu Raja has a mobile processional icon. Yet these matters are each far more complex than I have so far allowed. Pottu Raja figures at the center of virtually all Draupadi cult temple and festival activities, while Muttal Ravuttan is repeatedly relegated to zones of peripherality and obscurity. Thus one paratiyar could scoff at icons and stories of Muttal Ravuttan, seeing them as irrelevant to the cult. Yet in his version of Pottu Raja's Gingee myth, he could have Draupadi show her gratitude for Pottu Raja's head-holding service by decreeing that he be the first recipient of all respect (*mariyatai*)and all pujas within her temples and festivals, and close by saying that without Pottu Raja there is no festival. Indeed, from the beginning of a festival to its end, Pottu Raja's icons are omnipresent, and are treated as if they represented one of the festival's high dignitaries, though which one in particular it is impossible to say, since just as Pottu Raja transgresses caste boundaries, so one sees in the festival presences of his icons something of the Brahman, something of the temple trustees as festival patrons (in the role of yajamana), something of the possessed pucari, and something of the demon in every devotee.

If one can state matters summarily, however, the division of ritual roles bears on an interpretation of sacrifice, one which is itself a double reinterpretation of the sacrificial themes of the *Mahabharata* and of South Indian animal sacrifices of the type that in Andhra are offered to village goddesses and Pota Raju. Moreover, the division is not just between Pottu Raja and Muttal Ravuttan, but between the two of them and Draupadi, the goddess who *mythically* severs a demon's hundred heads and uses ritual weapons to win the Mahabharata war. On the face of it, however, and in the view of informants, in terms of actual ritual the Draupadi cult involves no animal sacrifices. Draupadi in particular receives none herself, and Pottu Raja, at least as represented by his icons (one does find Pormannan in his dramas demanding goat meat and eating live rooster), is vegetarian. The primary ritual function of Pottu Raja's roving processional icon is thus to oversee *symbolic* sacrificial offeringsinvolving actors, icons, effigies, and possessions rather than real live oblationsthat involve reenactments of the major killings in the *Mahabharata* myth of the "sacrifice of battle." Meanwhile,

without a processional icon, Muttal Ravuttan is predictably absent from such reenactments of the epic war. For as with his myths, so also in the rituals he is usually unrepresented at the epic war scenes, although one informant said he accompanies Pottu Raja's icon *invisibly*!Just as Draupadi can't see his stationary icon, we can't see his portable one.

But if Draupadi requires no *real* animal sacrifice *within* the time and space of her festival, she *allows* themand, according to the myth of Muttal Ravuttan and his pregnant sister, actually arranges for themon its temporo-spatial periphery, the place where Muttal Ravuttan is visibly fixed. Here one finds him represented most often by the little offering stones that are ultimately, and in some cases quite recognizably, multiforms of a sacrificial post. Meanwhile, the stationary icon of Pottu Raja that receives vegetarian offrings *usually* represents him in human form, and only rarelyas at Kalahasti (see n. 8)in a multiform of the sacrificial stake which so widely represents him in Andhra. This is not to say that Draupadi's Pottu Raja entirely relinquishes his associations with the sacrificial stake. His stationary icon is normally placed in conjunction with the balipitham (offering stone) and temple flagstaff, and at some temples the base of the flagstaff bears his image. Although I cannot develop the point here, there are continuities between the sacrificial post and the flagstaff. Moreover, Pottu Raja-Pormannan's ritual weapons include the trident or pike, a portable multiform of the sacrificial stake, and the whip, a multiform of the rope that binds sacrificial victims to it. 22 But as far as their stationary icons go, he does in large part relinquish the sacrificial stake's explicit representation to Muttal Ravuttan, marking its movement from the center of a village goddess type cult to its periphery in the cult of Draupadi. For not only are non-vegetarian offerings made to Muttal Ravuttan's little stones outside the goddess's line of sight. They are made at *no regular* time in her festival: at various places only by private arrangement with the pucari during the festival, or at non-festival times, or at a special ceremony after the festival is over.

Yet if the offerings to Muttal Ravuttan are set off and apart at Draupadi festivals, they are still part of Draupadi's cult. His most consistent offerings are liquor and goats, with these and most additional itemscocks, hens, meat curries, parched spicy Bengal gram ("a standard item in liquor shops, . . . said to prevent nausea produced by an excessive consumption of alcohol"),23 marijuana, opium, chapattis, cigars, cheroots, cigarettes, and horse gram for his horsebeing common fare for

such "criminal" gods and heroes.24 But in Muttal Ravuttan's case it is to be understood that certain of these things

meat, chapattis, drugs, liquor, and perhaps Bengal gramcombine to caricature him as a Muslim. His iconography make this conclusion inescapable.

Invisibility, peripherality, irregularity, historical incongruity, and religious otherness: One might think that Muttal Ravuttan's position on the margins of the Draupadi cult derives from some supposed vagueness or slackness of folk Hinduism, or some inevitable concession to "popular" survivals of "Dravidian animal sacrifice." These, however, cannot be our conclusions. For the periphery to which Muttal Ravuttan is consigned is not without its precise ritual definitions. First of all, as Biardeau has observed, the northeast is "the habitual position of the ksetrapala," the "guardian of the field." 25 As ksetrapala of the Draupadi temple, Muttal Ravuttan is much like other deities of this designation, most notablyalso with his dogs, tigers, horses, liquor, and drugsthe god Khandoba in Maharashtra.26 But while the pan-Indian ksetrapala Bhairava may also have this same cluster of attributes, he has one that, in the Draupadi cult, is connected not with Muttal Ravuttan but with Pottu Raja: the head held in the hand. I will return to this point shortly. Moreover, the ksetrapala with his "habitual position" to the northeast shares this precise location with a related figure in Brahmanical temples. This is the nirmalyadevata, the deityoften a lower form of the temple's main deitywho receives the "residue of offerings" (nirmalya) of the main deity, guards it from violation, and handles its impurity.27 I have not found Muttal Ravuttan actually receiving Draupadi's nirmalya. But the offerings he does receive are in effect the nirmalya of the violent aspects of her mythology.

Surprisingly, such continuities as these are rooted not within some "folk religious" miasma but within the framework of the traditional Vedic sacrifice as it is conserved, yet transformed, through the medium of popular bhakti Hinduism. For the relative positions and functions of Muttal Ravuttan and Pottu Raja also have, of all things, a Vedic pedigree. In the Vedic animal sacrifice, the northeast is associated with the *samitr*,the "appeaser" priest (from the root *sam-*,to appease, to pacify) who is responsible for killing the sacrificial animal by the allegedly "appeasing" and non-bloodletting means of suffocation or strangulation. It is to the northeast of the *mahavedi*,the additional "great altar" required for animal sacrifices, that one finds the *samitra*,the *samitr's* fire (and sometimes a shed) on which the samitr cooks or roasts the limbs and other portions of the victim after cutting them: a process which must have included some handling of the victim's severed head, even if the texts are rather quiet on this point.28 What is significant

for our purposes is that the samitr's fire is distinct from the sacrificial post (the yupa), which is set at the eastern end of the mahavedi. In this regard, the yupa corresponds to the typical position occupied by the temple flagstaff, which, as noted earlier, is connected not with Muttal Ravuttan but Pottu Raja. With these overlapping ritual structures now before us, let us traverse them one last time while recalling the icons and mythologies of our two heroes and their goddess.

As Draupadi cult mythology itself should recommend, let us take our cue from the cult's bhakti framework, which encompasses and orients its sacrificial imagery. For present purposes, I would propose that Muttal Ravuttan and Draupadi represent two poles of a bhakti continuum. While Draupadi's appeal to Krsna during her disrobing represents bhakti at its most sublime, her devotion is cointerpoised by numerous expressions of inferior bhakti, among which that of Muttal Ravuttan ranges toward the bottom. The important thing is that such inferior bhakti has itself two potentials: it can be transformed into higher bhakti, or it can take on perverse forms linked with drunkenness, black magic, and the crudest parodies of sacrifice such as the willingness to offer up a pregnant sister. It is a ritual function of Muttal Ravuttan, mantravadi and Muslim, to stand at the boundary between these possibilities. On the one hand, he is surrounded by animals that evoke violence, impurity, magic, and possession; his attendants ply him with liquor, his devotees with marijuana and opium. In Draupadi cult contexts, drunkenness and narcotics are thought of as inducing a kind of impure, or "polluted" possession, one which is essentially demonic and stands in opposition to higher forms of possession which become vehicles for bhakti. Yet Muttal Ravuttan does not simply indulge himself in such pastimes. To be sure, he partakes of what he is offered. But he is said to neutralize the offerings' dangerous effects so that when they are returned to the offerer as *prasadam*,they have lost their heating or intoxicating qualities. One must thus understand that when liquor, drugs, and various hot foods are offered to the little stones that represent him, he detoxifies them so that the

offerers (or sometimes the pucari) can consume them *unaffected*.Like other "criminal gods" and "demon devotees" who are "converted" to the worship of the goddess, he thus retains facets of his "former" character, but places them at the service of higher expressions of bhakti. His myths, rites, and icons thus represent him in a variety of trespassive modes, while they also fix the boundary situations through which his cult enables Draupadi's devotees to neutralize their dangers through worshipping him.

If Muttal Ravuttan's service is to neutralize outside dangers, Pottu Raja's can in part be characterized as neutralizing dangers from within. This he does by forever holding the head that would destroy the goddess, the kingdom of Gingee, or the world itself if it fell. Let us recall in this connection that the pan-Indian prototype of the head-holding guardian deity is Bhairava, who holds the head of Brahma as a result of having committed the ultimate violatory act of a divine Brahmanicide that is also a patricide, for Brahma is father of the gods. Although this is not the place to demonstrate it, there are reasons to suspect that Pottu Raja's icons derive this feature, at least in part, from the iconography of Bhairava. And his myths also evoke, and indeed divide, the same violatory themes. For in one case the hundred-headed demon, whose last head he holds, has the traits of a Brahmaraksasa, a Brahman who claims the royal function through defying a weak king. And in the other, he carries the head of his own father. Let us note here further that Pottu Raja's head-holding, like that of Bhairava, is bound up with myths and rituals of possession, and that the various ritual weapons he comes to share with Draupadi include means both to induce possession (the whip, the trident) and to neutralize it (the whip, turmeric powder). All this sounds remarkably like Muttal Ravuttan. But Pottu Raja's possession is normally not tinged with drunkenness or drugs. 29 Rather, in terms of myth, it is rooted in themes of sacrifice turned toward bhakti: in one aspect recalling the transformation of his buffalo animality into service to the goddess, and in another the link between the severed head of Brahma and the madness of Bhairava that is prelude to the experience of liberation or divine union. But it is especially the icons that clarify such distinctions. For if one recalls the Vedic model that keeps our two heroes in their intimate rapport, one sees the very opposite of the situation one might expect. In effect, Muttal Ravuttan and Pottu Raja have made a trade. Out at the northeast periphery where the ksetrapala Bhairava would normally hold the head of Brahma, and where the samitr would dismember the sacrificial animal and thus have to handle the "head of the sacrifice,"30 one finds Muttal Ravuttan represented by multiforms of the sacrificial stake which one might normally expect to find at the end of the central eastern axis of the mahavedi or, *mutatis mutandis*,of a village goddess temple. And at the eastern end of this central axis, where one might expect to find the stake itself, one finds Pottu Raja, the erstwhile stake of Andhra, holding the sacrificial head instead. The post and the "head of the sacrifice" have thus reversed their positions. A complete discussion of this reversal would have to take into account the Draupadi

cult's treatment of other "primary elements of the sacrifice" as well: most notably the body of the victim and the sacrificial fire. But for the moment it is enough to observe that the reversal of these twothe head and the postis in predictable accordance with the Draupadi cult's sacrificial logic, which imputes actual sacrifice to the cult's periphery, where it is overseen by Muttal Ravuttan, yet retains the symbolism of sacrifice at its center, where it is overseen by Pottu Raja and multi-vocally represented by the head in his hand. For there the head-holding Pottu Raja can stand facing Draupadi with a symbol of both the ultimate sin of Brahmanicide and of the devotee's own self-offering (remember, Pottu Raja is a Brahman too) to the goddess.

Finally, however, it is the goddess, in our case Draupadi herself, who must explain these themes. As I put it earlier somewhat metaphorically, it is the violent implications of her mythology that become the nirmalya of Muttal Ravuttan. Indeed, she stops his sacrifice of his pregnant sisterand its implied aborticideafter she herself had ordered it, because "she is a woman like me": an evocation of the theme of the goddess as sacrificial victim (like Renuka or Sati), a reminder that Draupadi is herself treated as such a victim when the Kauravas drag her about by the hair, 31 and a further reminder of themes in her cult that relate the murder of her own five children in the night raid that ends the Mahabharata war to themes of abortive death and regeneration. The mantravadi's boundary enthrallments are thus inverted images of Draupadi's own mistreatments: that is, of the violation of the goddess.32 Similarly, at least in the Gingee myth, the head which Pottu Raja holds is the last of a hundred which Draupadi herself has severed; and should Pottu Raja drop it she would turn instantly from victor to victim. Thus in both cases, Draupadi is not only implicated in the violatory acts of her guardians, but in the sacrificial imagery of those acts. Furthermore, her own cultic and epic mythology has its own

trangressive themes with their own sacrificial dimensions. Most centrally, she vows to wear her hair dishevelled (an image of Kali) through her years of exile, and not to rebraid it until she can "oil" it with the sacrificial blood of her chief Kaurava tormentor. Here there is no question of her remaining pure while her guardians handle the sacrificial impurity on her behalf. Defiled, she will remain defiled until she can purify herself with the very blood of her defiler. Moreover, from being the victim, she has become the victor, an image in fact of Durga. And as the goddess who uses ritual weapons to achieve this end, she is not only the recipient of offerings, but the executor of sacrificial killings. It would thus seem that what her two guardians

finally guard, one at her frontier and the other at the entrance to her sanctumthe "womb house" which all must enter but none must violateis the mystery at the heart of these alternating sacrificial images: the goddess herself as sakti, the "power" who surpasses all boundaries, participates in and endures all transgressions, even those which violate and victimize her, who yet remains pure, inviolate, and regenerative, and who defeats and yet releasesthe inevitable bhakti noteall those who have trespassed against her.

Notes

1. See my larger study *The Cult of Draupadi*, *I*. *Mythologies*: *From Gingee to Kuruksetra* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), to be followed by a second volume on Draupadi cult rituals. Certain material in this essay is treated more fully in these studies.

2. On this etymology, see Madeleine Biardeau in Biardeau and Charles Malamoud, *Le sacrifice dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), 151; Hiltebeitel, *The Cult of Draupadi*,I, chapter 2, n. 8.

3. The name is derived from Urdu *raut*,"horseman," which is itself derived from either Prakrit *rajaduta* or *rajaputra*.My thanks to Lee Weissman for tracking down this etymology.

4. Muttal Ravuttan has also been found as an attendant to Mariyamman, and apparently to Aiyanar (see Hiltebeitel, *The Cult of Draupadi*,I, chapter 6). At the temple of Kutti Antavar (a form of Murukan) at Tirttanpalaiyam village (Chidambaram Taluk, South Arcot District) he is the leader of the three guardians (*kaval*)of the separate mandapa of Jampulinkam (a form of Siva). The other two are named Latan and Canyasi (Sanskrit Samnyasi), and all three are represented by small rectangular stones set in separate concrete platforms. But his only consistent presence seems to be in the Draupadi cult.

5. Draupadi is of course not unique in having two or more guardian (kaval) or "attendant" (parivara) deities. For Tamilnadu alone, see Biardeau's discussion in this volume of Kattavarayan and Karuppu in the cult of Mariyamman, and Eveline Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*: *A Goddess of Tamilnadu*, *her Myths and Cult* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), 74-82 on the four guardians of Ankalamman. See further Stanley in this volume on Khandoba's demon- and minister-attendants. This article will not attempt to move from the particulars of the rapport between Draupadi's two guardians to generalizations about this wider phenomenon, other than to note that any generalizations would require considerable caution.

6. See Hiltebeitel, *The Cult of Draupadi*,I, chapter 6 and plate 9.

7. On Pottu Raja as sacrificial post in Andhra, see Madeleine Biardeau,

"L'arbre sami et le buffle sacrificiel," in Biardeau, ed., *Autour de la déesse hindoue*, *Purusartha* 5 (1981), 230-238; Henry Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India* (Delhi: Sumit Publications, 1976), Plate IV, facing p. 39.

8. At Viranantal (Chengam Taluk, North Arcot District), Tailapuram (Tindivanam Taluk, South Arcot District), and Kuttampakkam (Vaniyambadi Taluk, North Arcot). On the latter, see Madeleine Biardeau, *Histoire de poteaux*: *variations védiques autour de la Déesse* (Paris: Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient, in press).

9. On Pottu Raja and the Seven Sisters, see Biardeau, "L'arbe sami," 231; Wilbur Theodore Elmore, *Dravidian Gods in Modern Hinduism*. *A Study of Local and Village Deities of Southern India* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1915), 18-30.

10. Kotantarama Upattiyayar, Ra. Ve., *Cankuvati Kaliyanam ennum Por Mannan Cantai Natakam* (Madras: Canmukananta Puttakacalai, 1980 [earliest edition found 1955; author's dates unknown]).

11. Biardeau, *Histoire de poteaux*,in press, from a paratiyar interviewed at Pondicherry.

12. Actually, the Kalahasti myth draws its structure not only from the Pormannan cycle. Its theme of stealing the astrological knowledge of how and when to begin the war is probably adapted from the Tamil epic and Draupadi cult mythology of Arjuna's son Aravan; see Hiltebeitel, *The Cult of Draupadi*,I, chapter 15.

13. Biardeau, "*L'arbre sami*,"238.

14. M. Arunachalam, *Peeps into Tamil Literature*: *Ballad Poetry* (Tiruchitrambalam: Gandhi Vidyalayam, 1976), 187-194.

15. See Biardeau's and Shulman's essays in this volume, and A. K. Ramanujan, "Two Realms of Kannada Folklore," in Ramanujan and Stuart Blackburn, eds., *Another Harmony*: *New Essays on the Folklore of India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 46. It might be investigated whether Kattavarayan bears any greater traces of a connection with Kartavirya in Renuka-Mariyamman temple mythologies, where one might expect such traces, than he does in the ballad literature discussed by Shulman and Masilamani-Meyer in this volume, where his links are with the cult of Kamaksi.

16. Marie Louise Reiniche, *Les dieux et les hommes*: *Étude des cultes d'un village du Tirunelveli Inde du Sud* (Paris: Mouton, 1979), 205-207; Arunachalam, *Ballad Poetry*,191-192.

17. Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*,7 vols. (Madras: Government Press, 1904), vol. 6, 25-28, describe traditions of a group of magician-mendicants among Vanniyars around Madras called Jatippillais (literally, "Children of the Caste"): their ancestor won them their title and prerogatives by saving the rest of the caste from an impasse by sacrificing his own girl-wife, pregnant for the first time, to the goddess Kamaksi so as to counteract the spells of a rival caste's magicians. Such mantravadi myths must be differ-

entiated from myths and rituals that portray the goddess Ankalamman sacrificing and disemboweling a pregnant queen; see Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*,12-14, 185-87, and 214-17 on the myth and related rituals, and 226-28 and 233 on comparison with Cutalai Matan.

18. Thurston and Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes*,vol. 6, 122-26.

19. Reiniche, *Les dieux et les hommes*,206-207.

20. This play was also published in chapbook form by the now defunct Sri Vani Vilaca Press of Cuddalore. I was never able to locate a copy.

21. Certain ramifications of the Hindu-Muslim problematic of the rapport between Pottu Raja and Muttal Ravuttan would seem to be paralleled in human terms in Maharashtra, where the Hindu outcaste Potraj divides certain sacrificial functions with a Muslim *mullana* who is in charge of the killing of cocks, goats, and hens: Traude Vetschera, "The Potaraja and Their Goddess," *Asian Folklore Studies* 37 (1978), 131.

22. See Biardeau in this volume.

23. Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi, "The Logic of South Indian Food Offerings," *Anthropos* 72 (1977), 548.

24. See, e.g., Arunachalam, *Ballad Poetry*,190; Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*,81-82; Shulman in this volume on the puja to Kattavarayan's sacrificial stake.

25. See Biardeau, *Histoire de poteaux*.

26. The affinities would actually seem to deepen with Khandoba's Andhra counterpart Mallanna: Consider the latter's Muslim beard (compare plate 37 with plates 28 and 29); his horse and tiger-dogs; his Muslim identities, one as Rautray (could this be *raut* as in ravuttan plus *ray* as in "king"?), who fights a Lingayat Raksasa, another as Malkhan, who tricks the Sivabhaktas of Mecca into smoking gañja; see Sontheimer in this volume.

27. Sunjukta Gupta, "Visvaksena the Divine Protector," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die kunde Südasiens und Arkhiv für Indische Philologie* 20 (1976), 80-85; Erik Af Edholm, "Canda and the Sacrificial Remnants. A Contribution to Indian Gastrotheology," *Indologica Taurinensia* 12 (1984), 75-89 on Can a-Candesvara Nayanar in the Saiva cultus; p. 89 on Candevari/Nirmalyadharini in the Sakta cultus; pp. 90-91 on Visvaksena in the Vaisnava cultus; Helène Brunner, "De la consommation du nirmalya de Siva," *Journal Asiatique* 27 (1969), 229-31. Compare Stanley's discussion in this volume of Heggade Pradhan and my comments on Candesvara Nayanar in this book's Introduction (at n. 7).

28. See Citrabhanu Sen, *A Dictionary of Vedic Rituals* (Delhi: Concept Publishing Co., 1978), 110-111 and Plans 3 and 5; Charles Malamoud, "Les chemins du couteau. Remarques sur les découpages dans le sacrifice védique," in Cristiano Grottanelli, ed., *Divisione delle carni*: *Dinamica sociale e organizzazione del cosmo*, *L'Uomo* 9 (1985), 32-36.

29. At only one temple (Mutikai Nallankuppam, Chingleput Taluk, Chingleput District) have I seen him represented with a glass of liquor, and that in a

painting on the same wall as the little stone representing Muttal Ravuttan: seemingly a case of the latter's "bad influence" or of "guilt by association."

30. On this theme, see especially Jan Heesterman, "The Case of the Severed Head," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 11 (1967), 22-43.

31. See Madeleine Biardeau, "Comptes rendus" of seminars on the *Mahabharata*, *Annuaire de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études*,Ve section, vol. 88 (1979*80*),180.

32. See also Meyer's discussion of the goddess's ambivalence as sacrificier and victim in *Ankalaparamecuvari*,especially p. 214 and citations in n. 17 above.

13
Violent and Fanatical Devotion Among the Nayanars: A Study in the Periya Puranam of Cekkilar

D. Dennis Hudson

The stories of the sixty-three Tamil Saiva saints, or Nayanars, appear in their complete form in the twelfth century Tamil hagiography entitled "The Purana of the Sacred Saints" (*Tiruttontar Puranam*),better known as the "Purana of the Great" or "The Great Purana" (*Periya Puranam*).The author is Cekkilar, a Velala from Tontai country, who, later tradition says, was a minister in the Chola court of Kulottunga II (1130-1150). 1 Kulottunga II was a devotee of Siva Nataraja at Chidambaram and continued the reconstruction of that cultic center of Tamil Saivism begun by his predecessors. At the same time he was enchanted by the Jaina epic, *Jivaka Cintamani*.To wean him away from it, we are told, his minister Cekkilar composed the *Periya Puranam*.

The *Cintamani* is a courtly epic infused with the erotic flavor called *srngara rasa*.The hero is Jivaka, a Ksatriya who combined heroics with erotics to marry a series of seven women and to gain a kingdom. In the end he realized the transiency of possessions, renounced the kingship, took refuge in the Jaina Tirthankaras, and after prolonged tapas attained Nirvana.2 In contrast, the *Periya Puranam* is a poetic work about the sixty-three saints whose devotion or bhakti is infused with the flavor of love called anpu. The Nayanars love Siva and Siva loves them and the stories tell how that

love manifested itself in everyday life and how it led the saints to transcendent freedom or moksa.

In the *Cintamani* the driving force is Jivaka who stands in the foreground exciting the audience with his heroic and erotic adventures.

In the *Periya Puranam* the driving force is Siva who stands in the background, stirring up things to elicit responses from the Nayanars. In the *Cintamani*,one might say, the focus is on the hero as he wins women to be his wives, but in the *Periya Puranam* the focus is on the "women" as they become "wives" to the hero.

Cekkilar's concern, it seems, was not to wean his king away from Jaina lore so much as to wean him away from erotics. He did this by using stories that had been current for centuries. Sundaramurtti Nayanar, probably in the seventh century, had listed sixty Nayanars in his "List of Devotees" (*Tiruttontattokai*),but had recorded none of their stories. About two centuries later Nambiyantar Nambi added the names of Sundaramurtti and his parents to the list in his "*Antati* of Devotees" (*Tiruttontar Tiruvantati*)and included a sketch of each saint's life.

By this time the Nayanars were appearing visually in the Siva cult as patronized by Tamil kings. A sculpture of the saint Kannappar appeared on a Pallava temple in the ninth century 3 and at the same time sculptures of most, if not all, of the Nayanar narratives appeared on a gateway and a wall of a Chola temple.4 The Chola king Rajaraja I (995-1012) linked his own rule to the saints Sundaramurtti and Ceraman Perumal by depicting their visit to the temple at Chidambaram where he had been crowned when he painted his coronation in his own great temple in Tanjore.5 A century later the Chola king Kulottunga I (1070-1122) sculpted many of the Nayanar stories on a new temple,6 and four decades later the Chola king Rajaraja II (1146-1172) sculpted narratives of all the Nayanars on the exterior of the temple and hall he built in his new capital.7 And in the meantime metal moveable images of the Nayanars were being cast and used in the rituals of these and other temples.

We see, therefore, that Cekkilar wrote his long poem in the context of royal attentiveness to the Nayanars as models of bhakti. In contrast to other hagiographiesthe Telugu "Basavanna Purana" for examplehis is an "establishment" text. It provides Saiva kings with religious justification for their rule. By his time seventy-two Nayanars had been identifiedthe sixty listed by Sundaramurtti, the three added by Nambiyantar Nambi, and nine others who appear individually in the stories of the sixty-threeand he gave each one individual attention, following the canons of Tamil courtly epics to create a poetic work that fits no specific genre of literature, a hagiography of four thousand two hundred and fifty-three verses that portrays the love the Nayanars had for Siva in its most absolute sense.

Considering that its theme of absolute devotion to God is addressed to a warrior king, we can view the *Periya Puranam* as a Tamil Saiva gloss on the central theme of the *Bhagavad Gita*,that famous Sanskrit discourse on bhakti that Krsna gave to the warrior Arjuna as his battle began. A tradition of Chidambaram, in fact, says that long ago Krsna himself received initiation there into the service of Siva. 8 The lives of the Nayanars, after all, do illustrate several aspects of bhakti that the *Bhagavad Gita* leaves undeveloped. They portray, for example, the cultic context of bhakti, the meaning of bhakti as "participation" in the object of devotion, and the consequences of absolute devotion to the Lord for the ordinary householder.

One wonders, however, how the violent or fanatical acts that at least twenty-four of the Nayanars performed out of love for Siva fit the *Bhagavad Gita*'s notion of saintly devotion.9 How, for example, is it saintly to give your wife away to an ascetic who asks for her and then to chop up your relatives and hers when they try to stop him from taking her out of town? How is it saintly to chop the heads off of everyone in your family, including servants and a nursing child, because during a famine they ate the food you had set apart for Siva's temples? How is it saintly to kill your only son because a sadhu asks you to and then to cook him and sit down to eat him?

On reflection, though, these violent acts are not inconsistent with the *Bhagavad Gita*.After all, the context of that text is a war and the pretext of that text is the anxiety Arjuna had about whether it is "criminal" to kill his own relatives and teachers for the sake of a kingdom, acts that he then went on to perform with many of the disastrous consequences he

feared. During the battle Krsna himself performed acts that transgressed the accepted law and order of battle in order to win.

But of course Krsna ultimately stands outside of law and order, for as chapters 11 through 14 of the *Bhagavad Gita* tell us, as the transcendent Vasudeva he himself eats the body of the universe and its order, gestates it once again within himself, gives it birth, brings it to maturation, and then eats it again. From a human point of view these look like acts of murder and cannibalism and, since the universe is a transformed mode of God himself, self-slaughter. But God transcends the order of the universe and his actions cannot be judged in our moral categories.

A problem for his devotees arises, however, when the transcendent God enters into the universe, stirs its order up, and forces them to respond, often in ways that resemble his transcendent acts but in fact

transgress the moral norms of society. The stories of the Nayanars tell us that Siva does this to demonstrate the extraordinary and ideal nature of their love for him and to submerge himself in that love. At times their responses are so fanatical and violent that we do not know where to place them morally.

For example, there is the story of Kannappa Nayanar. He was, Siva tradition says, Arjuna reborn and his life is thus a commentary on the bhakti of the *Bhagavad Gita*.The *Mahabharata* tells us that on a mountain Arjuna had fought with a hunter over a pig, but the hunter was Siva in disguise. Because he had scorned him as hunter, Saivism tells us, Arjuna was himself reborn as a hunter. But this reborn Arjuna felt an extraordinary love for Siva's linga on a mountain and offered him a pig, other animals, and then his eyes. In response, Siva took him out of rebirth to stand at his right side. Kannappa Nayanar was now forever yoked to Siva by love in moksa, or as Tamil Saivas say, in *sayujyam*. 10

Our intention here is to examine these acts of violent and fanatical devotion in the *Periya Puranam* to see how we can understand them in terms that are consistent with Tamil Hindu culture. We shall begin by looking at the *Purana* in its cultic context and then consider what it tells us about anpu, about love of Siva as participation in him and about Siva's lovers as extensions of him. We shall end with the question of why some devotees kill themselves out of love for Siva and some observations about the *Purana* as an "establishment" text.

A. The Cultic Context of the *Periya Puranam*

One theme besides bhakti that unifies the stories of the Nayanars is the sanctity of the three cultic elements of Agamic Saivism: the linga, the guru, and the assembly of the "slaves of Siva." The slaves are devotees who wear ashes (vibhuti) and beads (rudraksa) that are the emblems of Siva, and they may be either householders or asceticsand the ascetics may belong to any of six orders recognized by the liturgical texts that guide the rituals and thought, the Agamas.11

All the Nayanars treat the linga, the guru, and the slaves as manifestations of Siva himself and all of them attain sayujyam because of undeviating service to one of them. Among those who perform violent acts, however, none does so out of devotion to a guru. Violent devotion derives from emotional attachment, not from insightful detachment.

"Attach your mind to Me," Krishna had told Arjuna, and Cekkilar shows us how to do it.12 Love for Siva, he makes clear, is not a vague feeling towards a generalized object, but an orientation of the mind,

body, and speech towards a concrete cultic element in a specific context. Love for Siva, it seems, does not develop without attention to the details of cultic service, nor is it expressed except through such service and usually in the midst of one's daily householder life. Attention to the linga, for example, may mean a commitment to supply the oil for lamps in a specific temple, or to grind the sandalpaste for a specific linga, or to prevent the temple services from being disrupted or its articles from being polluted, or to throw back the first fish of each day's catch. Attention to a slave of Siva always means bestowing the rites of hospitality that include washing his feet and giving him whatever he asks. The slave one serves need not even be genuineit is enough to honor the emblems of Siva that a man wears, even if he wears them under false pretenses.

The unusualand paradigmaticquality of the Nayanars' love for Siva, and the reason for their fierce acts, is its absolute nature. When the Tamil word for this love, *anpu*,is used in the sense of wanting to perform acts of love for Siva incessantly, it means the same thing as bhakti. And anpu itself is *inpam*,joy, or more accurately, I think, deep satisfaction. 13 A saint's commitment to a particular cultic element gives him life-fulfilling satisfaction (inpam) and takes precedent over every other duty and relationship he has. He carries it out consistently to a degree that can only be termed fanatical.

The Nayanars give no room at all to the normal and relative values of pleasure (*kama*),prosperity (*artha*),and righteousness (dharma); nor do they aspire for transcendent freedom (moksa); all they desire is lovingly to serve Siva in the concrete here and now. And when Siva, in his graciousness, stirs up the limiting realities of time and space (samsara), they sustain their absolute commitment and end up behaving like fanatics, madmen or criminals. Nothing will divert them from fulfilling their commitment to serve Siva, not even when Siva himself provides a way out. One might call this a form of "individualism," for the Nayanar is prepared to break all normal social bonds. But the Nayanar does not see himself as being "individualistic" for everything he does is motivated not out of self-interest but out of love for Sivaout of "Siva-interest," one might say.

The simplest and most extreme example of commitment to cult taking precedence over the relative values of family life is Kotpuli Nayanar, "Saint Ferocious Tiger."14 His service to Siva was setting aside paddy to use in Siva temples. When he went away to war he instructed each member of his household not to use the grain, but a famine came while he was gone and they ate the rice, planning to

replace it later. He learned of it when he returned and so, setting a guard at the door of his house, he slaughtered everyone in the householdhis father, mother, wife, brothers, sisters, and all other relatives, and also the servants. Only a baby boy was left and the guard asked to save him since he had not eaten the paddy. "Yes, but he nursed from a woman who had," said the Nayanar, and chopped the baby's head off (see plate 40). 15

The story of Iyarpakai Nayanar, "Saint Hostile Nature," illustrates the kind of "individualism" based on Siva-interest that this anpu may lead to.16 In order to demonstrate that Hostile Nature joyfully would give the slaves of Siva whatever they asked for, Siva appeared at his door in the guise of a lecherous Brahman smeared in ashes. When he asked for the Nayanar's wife, he happily complied, as did she. When the Brahman then asked him to protect him and the wife from attacks by their relatives and townspeople, the Nayanar regretted only that he had not thought of that first and picked up his sword and shield. As they crossed the town, both his and her relatives gathered murmuring, "Even though Saint Hostile Nature, out of his craziness, gave her away, is it right that anyone should take her?" Then holding weapons they approached the three and angrily expressed their fears:

> Hey! Hostile Nature! What do you think you're doing? You don't give a damn about the way the townspeople will censure us or about the way our enemies will sneer and ridicule us. You talk as if you alone have the right to give away your wife to the Brahman. Only if we all agree can you give her to him.

Then they went for the Brahman, whereupon Hostile Nature flew into a rage and swinging his sword left and right chopped off their shoulders, legs, and heads until no one was left standing. Then he continued to walk with the Brahman and the wife until both were safe.

Love for Siva can also create irreconcilable cultic commitments, as the story of Eyarkon Kalikkama Nayanar illustrates. "Saint Kalikkama, King of the Eyars," grew enormously angry when he heard that Saint Sundaramurtti had sent Siva as a messenger in the night to a woman he loved. It is one thing for Siva to agree to act as a messenger for a slave, he figured, but quite another for a slave to order his master to do ita grievous fault in service to the linga. Siva learned of his anger and decided to stir things up by bringing Kalikkama and the hated Sundaramurtti together. He afflicted Kalikkama with a painful disorder of bodily humors and then told him in a dream that only



40. Saint Ferocious tiger (Kotpuli Nayanar) destroys his family and servants who during a famine had eaten paddy set aside for Siva. A guard urges him to save a nursing infant. Photo by Dennis Hudson.

Sundaramurtti could heal him. Kalikkama said he would rather go on suffering than be healed by Sundaramurtti. "Besides," he lovingly told Siva, "who knows your greatness? You will give strength to those who are firm in serving you."

Siva then told Sundaramurtti to go and heal Kalikkama, but when Kalikkama heard that Sundaramurtti was coming, he realized his dilemma: Either be faithful to the linga and remain aloof from the criminal devotee, or be faithful to the slave of Siva and let himself be healed by him. He opted for the linga and picked up a knife and disembowled himself. When Sundaramurtti arrived and saw what he had done, he was so impressed that he decided to walk the same path and he picked up the knife to rip open his own stomach when Siva brought him to a halt.

Kalikkama believed, of course, that even though Sundaramurtti was a rogue, he did wear the emblems of Siva and deserved his loving service. The story of Enatinata Nayanar, "Saint Lord of the Generals," makes vividly clear the sacred quality of the ashes and the rudraksa beads independent of their wearer. His job was to train Chola rulers in swordsmanship. A rival for his post tried to defeat him in a battle but was routed in disgrace. Deciding that he could beat the Nayanar only by deceit, the rival challenged him to a private duel. Saint Lord of the Generals appeared at the appointed place and waited. Soon his deceiving opponent appeared with his head hidden behind his shield. As he drew near and as the Nayanar made his move to attack, the deceiver pulled his head out from behind the shield, revealing ash on his forehead. The Nayanar thought to himself, "Alas, I'm finished. I never saw ash on his forehead before, but I see it now. What choice do I have? He's become a slave of Siva and so I'll follow whatever course he chooses." He was about to throw aside his sword and shield when he thought, "No, he shouldn't bear the guilt of killing an unarmed man." So he stood there holding his sword as if he really were an opponent and the deceiver killed him.

B. Love as Participation in Siva

Siva's dharma, Arumuka Navalar tells us, consists of both mild (*manta*)and fierce (*tivira*)acts.

Among these, mild acts are the Path of Action that follows the way laid down for temple service (*carya*)and ritual service (kriya) in the Agamas. Fierce acts are the Path of Bhakti that transgresses the way of the world,

a path motivated by a flood of anpu for Siva. This anpu, which arises without limits and ripens very quickly, occurs in a birth that itself is a result of having walked the Path of action for a long time and without missing a step. 17

Excessive rather than restrained love is the ideal, Navalar suggests, and expresses itself in what we see as bizarre behaviour. These fierce acts of devotion reveal the quality of the devotee's love, and one can only stand awestruck, mouth gaping, when seeing them. The paradigm for this excessive anpu is the story of the young Untouchable hunter chief whose name was Tinnanar, "The Robust," Arjuna reborn whom we have already met.18

The story touches on several topics but let us focus on four things it says about anpu. First, it tells us that when anpu ripens a transubstantiation of the devotee's nature occurs that dissolves his bonds to others in society. For example, when the barbaric hunter saw the Kalatti (or Kalahasti) mountain where Siva the Lord of the Mountain dwells as a linga, an urgent desire to climb the mountain welled up within him. As soon as Tinnanar spotted the linga Siva gazed upon him and transformed his entire being into love for Siva. As Navalar put it, "By the initiation [diksa] of Siva's gracious look, his individual nature *[pacuttuvam]* was removed and he received Siva's nature *[civattuvam]*."19 From now on his hunter identity was only the mode through which love for Siva expressed itself, a love for God who was now part of himself.

Now he derived satisfaction in life solely from taking care of Siva, that is, from attention to the cultic service of the linga named Kalattiyappa, Lord of the Kalatti Mountain. And because he remained a hunter, though of a transformed nature, he was subject to the normal feelings of joy and sorrow that follow inevitably from attachment to anyone in this world. While joy that Kalattiyappa had chosen him was overwhelming, he nevertheless worried that the Lord stood alone and hungry and was subject to the prowlings of wild animals. This fanatical infatuation led his fellow castemen to see him as subject to some sort of divine madness they could not exorcise and his parents to find him beyond their authority altogether. Siva had pulled Tinnanar completely out of the web of conventions that make up the communal life of hunters.20

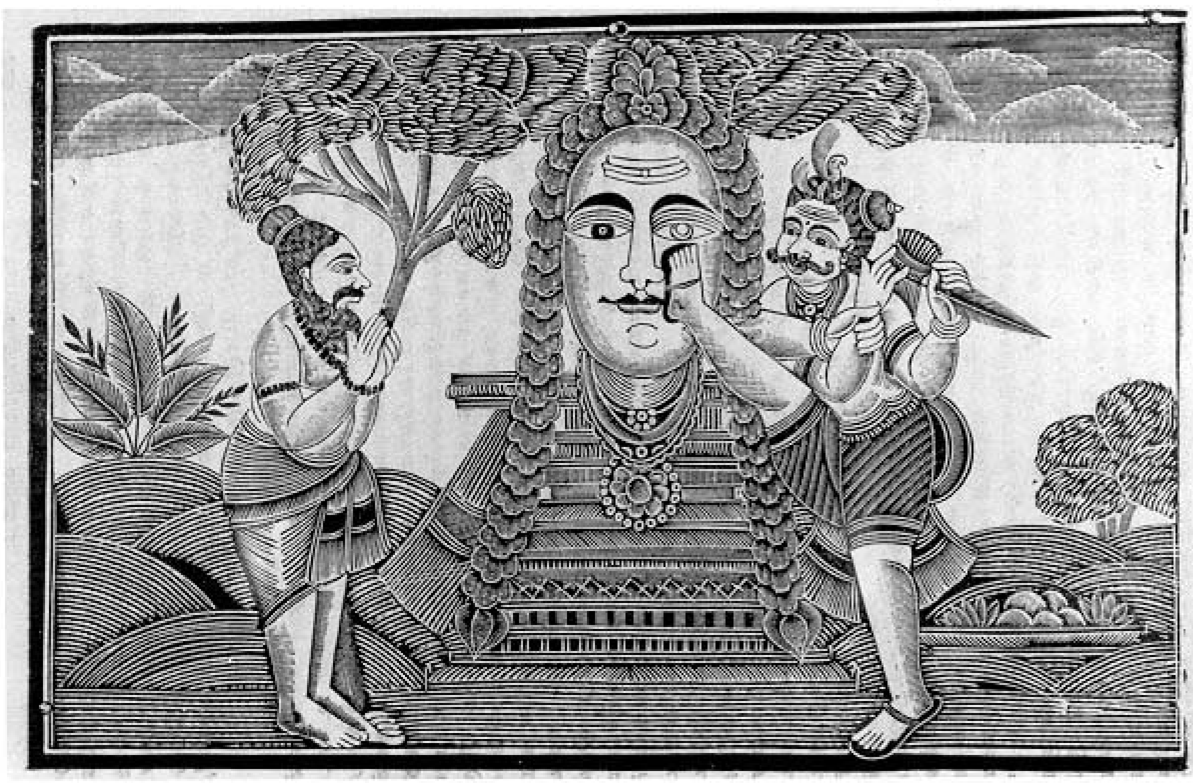
Second, the story tells us that anpu need not include learning and ritual purity, only a singleminded commitment of one's total nature to Siva, a commitment expressed in a specific cultic context and

experienced by others as a psychotic infatuation. When Tinnanar decided to clean his Lord up and to feed him, he did so in complete ignorance of the Agamas and acted as an infatuated Untouchable hunter would. He brought to the linga pig's meat that he chewed in order to find the tastiest morsels, water that he carried in his mouth, and flowers that he stuck in his hair. He then performed puja in ways that the Agamas rank as defiling. He brushed the linga off with the sandal on his foot, he bathed it by spitting water over it, he dropped the flowers from his head onto Siva's, and he fed him the saliva-drenched pork. He did this for six days.

In the meantime, Kalattiyappa explained to a Brahman who served the linga while Tinnanar was away hunting why he enjoyed Tinnanar's abominable ritual, a lengthy explanation summed up by one example: "The water that he spits on us from his mouth, because it flows from the vessel made of love called his body, is more pure to us than even the Ganges and all auspicious tirthas." 21 Anpu is the normal experience we have when our feeling, thinking, and speaking are unified in an attentiveness to another that we call infatuation, but infatuation for Siva may carry one far beyond normal moral boundaries. For practical human purposes, Tinnanar was mad, crazy, psychoticout of touch with reality. Only the fact that the center of his fanatic attention was a linga made it tolerable to others, though nevertheless he remained useless to hunter society.

Third, the story tells us that not only was Tinnanar "hooked" on Siva, Siva was himself "hooked" on Tinnanar. Anpu, one might say, is a drug they shared in common. In order to show the Brahman what true bhakti is, Siva created a situation that pushed Tinnanar to express his love to the extreme, but Siva himself could only take so much of it. A surfeit of anpu

welled up within him and he brought the Nayanar's extreme behaviour to a halt. The story is popular. Siva made blood flow from his right eye. Tinnanar tried everything he could to stop it, but only when he remembered the adage, "Put flesh on flesh," did he find the remedy. With an arrow he dug out his own eye and stuck it on the bleeding eye of the linga. Instantly the bleeding stopped. Like a madman Tinnanar danced in a delirium of joy until Siva made his left eye bleed and he immediately fell into an ocean of sorrow. Then he remembered his other eye. Delighted that he had the remedy so near at hand, he sat in front of the linga, put the sandal on his foot next to the bleeding eye to mark it, picked up an arrow, and put it to his remaining eye. But, Cekkilar tells us,



41. Tinnanar, Saint Darling of My Eye (Kannappa Nayanar), having healed Siva's bleeding eye with one of his own, prepares to gouge out his remaining eye with an arrow, marking Siva's second bleeding eye with his foot. A Brahman watches this Untouchable hunter as Siva, overcome by his love, reaches out to restrain him. Photo by Dennis Hudson.

> The Lord, a treasure of compassion, could not bear it. He opened the sacred mouth that had revealed the Vedas and Agamas and graciously said, "Stop, darling of my eye. Stop, Kannappa. Stop stimulating my love, Kannappa," and reaching out from the linga, seized the hand holding the arrow.

The Lord then said, "Kannappa, you have pure bhakti. Come and stand at our right side" (see plate 41). 22

The final point the story makes about anpu for Siva is that it is connected with flesh and blood. In response to Siva's bleeding eyes Tinnanar gives his bleeding eyes and through their mingled blood Siva reveals himself. Siva's blood and the injury to his vision it implies evokes Tinnanar's sacrifice of his vision which allows him finally to see truly. And Tinnanar's own dismemberment of himself actually heals Siva and provokes his response. Perhaps the old saying he follows, "flesh on flesh," means that to heal a god one must give one's own flesh and blood. But why would a god need healing? Perhaps because he has been injured physically through his icon, as is the case here, or because he has been

injured through disparagement of his honor and status, as is the case in other stories. One would think the injurer would pay the price of healing, but the greatness of Tinnanar's love is that though he had not injured the linga he joyfully paid the price to heal it with his own flesh and blood. When one gives one's own flesh and blood in love to heal God, God responds with love and one sees himand to see him is to participate in him.

Krsna told Arjuna, in the *Bhagavad Gita*,

> Be it a leaf or flower or fruit or water that a zealous soul may offer Me with love's devotion, that do I accept, for it was love that made the offering . . . [T]hose who commune with Me in love's devotion abide in Me, and I in them.23

Sometime before the tenth century Tirumula Nayanar had made the same point about love in his *Tirumantiram*:"Those who say anpu and Siva are two," he said, "do not understand. They do not know that anpu itself is the avatar of Siva. But once they realize that anpu is indeed the avatar of Siva, they themselves abide as Siva in anpu."24 Arumuka Navalar repeated the point in the nineteenth century in his commentary on the story of Kannappa Nayanar:

> In the maturity of anpu that grows and ripens without interruption, Siva is revealed. Anpu and Siva, therefore, exist non-differently and not as two. 25

The Nayanar and Siva share anpu in common and in that sharing there lies a mystery, the mystery of individual will and the divine will being two and yet not-two at the same time. Arjuna had been told of this mystery, too, but his love was not ripe enough to experience it. "In the region of the heart of all contingent beings dwells the Lord," Krsna had told him, "twirling them hither and thither by his uncanny power like puppets mounted on a machine."26 He who loves the Lord fully lets himself twirl with the twirling of the puppeteer, living in the fullest of satisfactions. Saivas say that Arjuna experienced the climax of this love only when it ripened when he loved Siva as Kannappa Nayanar.

If this be the case, then love as participation accounts for the fierce, violent, and fanatic behaviour of the Nayanars. Their acts, it turns out, are not just their own; they are also the acts of Siva and they reveal his nature to usa nature that appears to us at times as mad.27 The stories of the Nayanars, the Tamil scholar Mu. Arunacalam observes, are first of all stories of Siva. It is the experience of being enslaved to Siva, he says, that intoxicates the Nayanars and causes them to do all sorts of violent acts (*maram*).Bhakti makes them drunk and being drunk, he says, they are not responsible for what they do.28 The responsibility, then, we might say, lies with the one who allowed them to get drunk, Siva.

C. The Nayanars as Extensions of Siva

By virtue of their love for Siva, the Nayanars are extensions of Siva. The emblems they wearash and rudraksa beadsare worn by Siva and some Nayanars treat them as Siva himself. The slaves of Siva are to be regarded as Siva in the same way the linga is"moving" as opposed to "stationary" lingas. "Slavery" (atimai) is a metonym indicating that Siva, like a medieval landowner, keeps slaves in the "field" of samsara to do his work. These slaves, in fact, are miniature Sivas, human versions of the assembly of ganas that always surround the Lord,29 though they are divinized humans usually, not incarnate divinities.30 Insofar as the slaves act in accord with the master's will, the master is responsible for their actions. When slaves have anpu for their master, they know his will instinctively. Thus the actions that

flow from this love, "criminal" as they may seem, belong both to the slaves and to the master.

Tamil Saivism expresses this belief in the Nayanars as extensions of Siva through the ritual of Mahevara Puja, a mode of worshipping one's guru (guru puja). On the anniversary of each saint's attainment of sayujyam, devotees attend rituals in temples, and in their homes they worship and feed initiated slaves whom they call Mahesvarar, "those who belong to the Great Lord Siva," Mahesvara. The slave stands in for the Nayanar who himself stands in for Siva. In return the worshipers receive the grace of Siva that flows through the Nayanar by virtue of his anpu. 31

The idea that various people are extensions of oneself is common among Tamils. Siva, for example, is the Supreme Person whose full identity is expressed through a collection of other persons, each of whom looks like him and is yoked to him in sayujyam by a shared love. The divine personality is collective. Valentine Daniel has recently analyzed the way Tamil villagers today view themselves as extended into other people, usually kin,32 and the medieval *Periya Puranam* amply illustrates that same view. Without hesitation a Nayanar will involve his wife and children in his fanatical commitment to the cult of Siva as if they are modes of himself that he is giving to the Lord. His individuality, like Siva's, is communal; his social self extends beyond his own bodily boundaries into the bodies of his kin.33

Now, such a close identification with a Nayanar can prove beneficial to those family members who willingly enable him to fulfill his commitment to Siva. They do not participate in Siva as the Nayanar does, but they do participate in the Nayanar because they have anpu for him and that link suffices to pull them into moksa along with him. Thus the wife and son that Amarniti Nayanar gave away to a brahmacarin along with himself were granted sayujyam, as was the wife of Saint Hostile Nature after she faithfully let herself be given to the lecherous Brahman, never doubting that her husband would defend him even to the point of butchering their kinsmen. Similarly, sayujyam was given to the wife, son, and nurse in the household of Ciruttontar Nayanar, "Saint Little Servant," after he and they had killed his son, cooked him, and sat down to eat him together with a slave of Siva (see plate 42).34 So also the wife of Arivattaya Nayanar went to Siva's realm with him because she enabled him to fulfill his commitment to feed Siva ripe paddy, red greens, and young mangoes, despite increasing famine and their own hunger, and even though it was she who stumbled and caused him to spill his offerings into a crack in the parched ground



42. Saint Little Servant (Ciruttontar Nayanar) and his wife joyfully prepare their only son to be cooked and served to the *sadhu* in the upper left; he sets aside his son's head as unsuitable for eating. Photo by Dennis Hudson.

a failure he dealt with by trying to slit his own throat.

We all know, however, that it is not easy to live with a saint and the Nayanars amply illustrate that fact, too. One, for

example, tried to sell his wife to buy oil for temple lamps; one chopped his wife's hand off because she hesitated to wash the feet of a slave of Siva who used to be their servant; one, a Chola king, chopped his queen's nose off because he mistakenly thought she had smelled a flower that was for Siva's puja (the poor woman had already lost her hand to another mistaken saint); and one divorced his wife instantly because she blew a spider off a Siva linga. And reversing the hierarchy, one Nayanar chopped his father's feet off because he kicked over a pot of Siva's milk.

The basis for these violent acts of devotion, I think, is the communal notion of the self. In each caseexcept the killing and cooking of his son by Saint Little Servantthe Nayanar was compensating for what he perceived as an injury to Siva, an offense that he had committed through the action of someone who represented him. The story of Saint Hostile Nature makes this mode of thinking explicit. When relatives on both sides of his family tried to stop him from letting the lecherous Brahman take his wife away, their argument was not based on the individual happiness or suffering of the wife who had been given away, but on the effect his crazy act would have on the social position of the family. The Nayanar embodied the collective identity of the family just as the family embodied his identitywhich is why he so readily butchered them all. Whatever in "himself" stands in the way of serving Siva will be lopped off. Once lopped off, the crime will not spread to the rest of the "body"; the bloody sacrifice, it seems, creates a shield of purity around it.

This explains the removal of hands and noses, and even divorce. But in those cases where the crime has drenched the gross material body (*stula sarira*),the entire body will have to be sacrificed in order to cleanse the subtle material body inside it (*suksma sarira*). 35For example, the relatives whom Saint Hostile Nature slaughtered after he gave his wife to the lecherous Brahman were cleansed enough to go to heaven in their subtle bodily forms, as were the relatives and servants whom Saint Ferocious Tiger beheaded after they had eaten the paddy set aside for Siva.

The most telling example, however, is the story of Vicara Sarma, better known as Candesvara Nayanar. His Brahman father thought that Vicara Sarma was wasting the milk intended for the fire sacrifices by playing priest and pouring it over a sand lingam. He was wrong, of course, for Vicara Sarma was mentally performing the ritual service

of Siva according to the Agamas, and when his father angrily kicked over the pot of milk set aside for the ritual bath, the boy immediately took a stick (which turned into a sword) and chopped his father's feet off. Then he resumed the mental rituals. Although his father had committed an enormously grievous injury to Siva, the mutilation he received from his son while he was absorbed in worship cleansed the father of his sin and he went to Siva's realm. And although in principle Vicara Sarma had in one stroke murdered his father, a Brahman, and his guruthe worst of crimesno crime stuck to him. The anpu that filled his mind at the time and the actions it propelled served, it seems, to dissolve them instantly. Sivawho himself had once been guilty of Brahmanicideadopted him as his son and gave him a share in all his offerings by appointing him to the prestigious realm of Candesvara. 36

D. Love and Self-Slaughter

The idea that the slaughter of a sin-drenched outer body purifies the inner body explains why a Nayanar kills himself when he thinks he has in someway injured Siva. Tirukkuripputonta Nayanar, the "Saint who Served the Sacred Will," for example, was a washerman who washed the rags of Siva's slaves. Siva appeared to him in the guise of a skinny slave who wanted his rag washed and told the washerman that he would suffer from the cold if the rag was not washed and dried before sundown. Then as the man washed, Siva made it rain so that the rag would not dry before nightfall. The Nayanar was so full of grief for having made a slave suffer out of his desire to serve him that he tried to kill himself by bashing his head against the washing stone. The Nayanar believed that the slave he had injured was actually Siva, which he was, and he presumably thought that by bashing in his head his blood would heal the injury he had done to the Lord. In the process he would protect his inner body from the crime.

Then there is Kaliya Nayanar, an oil-presser, who served Siva by keeping lamps lit in his temple day and night. After awhile Siva decided to show others the strength of this Nayanar's absolute love and graciously wiped away all of his wealth. The Nayanar continued to supply oil through various degrading means until one day it was time to light the lamps and he had none. Unable to give up the satisfaction of serving Siva according to his commitment, he chose to kill himself in the act of service. He put wicks in the lamp bowls, arranged them carefully, took a knife, and in order to substitute his blood for the missing oil, cut his throat. His blood, he probably knew, would not burn, but

the absolute love it expressed would be an honor for Siva.

There is no suggestion in the stories that the Nayanars killed themselves for the sake of a better rebirth, but the love that motivated their act cleansed them nevertheless for Siva took them all to sayujyam, either just before or just after they did themselves in. When the saint turns the sword against himself out of love for Siva, therefore, he purifies himself of his failure in the service of his lord and heals the injury his failure has caused him. Self-slaughter is the extreme version of lopping off the offending limb to keep the rest of the body pure, only in this case, of course, there is no limb leftover to be pure, only the *atman* embodied in subtle matter and ready for the next birth.

Why did the Nayanars choose bloody ways to kill themselves? Most used a knife or a sword and one bashed his head on a rock. Only one chose the more seemly act of stepping into a fire. There were, after all, other ways to do it. They could have followed the Jainas in self-starvation, for example, or they could have performed a ritual drowning as did a Chalukyan king in 1068. 37

They chose bloody deaths, I think, because of the ancient Tamil belief that in blood and death the sacred power that regenerates life reveals itself,38 a sensibility that is also Vedic.39 The stories express the belief that through blood spilled for sacred purposes, whether in human sacrifices or animal sacrifices or in warfare, Siva can be seen by those who possess anpu. Cultic models for bloody sacrifices abounded in the medieval period. The Chola and other dynasties expanded their rule through bloody warfare that was itself viewed as a sacrificial ritual to regenerate the dynasty and kingdom. The self-sacrifice of humans for God and king was present in literature and art and, according to E. A. Gait, a male child was sacrificed every Friday night to Kali at the great Chola temple in Tanjore.40 Orders of sadhus like the Kapalikas who used blood and flesh in their sadhanas were common and Siva, whom they imitated, had been viewed by some as a sacrificer of animals to whom animals were sacrificed. Some of Siva's lingas had once received animal sacrifices, though during the Pallava and Chola periods priests guided by the Siva Agamas took animal sacrifices out of the temples housing the linga41just as the classical Vedic liturgists had removed the animal sacrifice from the precincts of the fireand left them for subordinate powers on the boundaries.

But the tradition of blood sacrifice to Siva has continued in the stories of the Nayanars, even though the Agamas they exalt had abolished it in the service of the linga. Instead of sacrificing a buffalo or goat, however, the Nayanar took the sword directly on his own

neck, or in his own gut, spilling his blood to purify himself and to heal Siva of the injury he had sustained through the devotee's failure. And the Nayanars likewise regenerated Siva's rule by expanding his cult, making themselves and others victims of devout violence in the process. Saint Guard of the Family, Kulaccirai Nayanar, for example, was a Pandyan prime minister devoted to Saint Tirujñanasambandar, the successful defender of Siva against the Jainas. At his master's instruction Saint Guard of the Family impaled eight thousand Jainas because they had reviled Siva and had defiled his monastery in Madurai (see plate 43).

The result is an "inner conflict of tradition," in J. C. Heesterman's terms. 42 A cult that has no blood and death in its ritual service of Siva in the temple, in the carya and kriya prescribed by the Agamas, has stories about paradigmatic devotees who serve it, protect it, and expand it through blood and death. The Agamic temple, representing Siva's world without death, is grounded in the Chola kingdom, representing the world of life and death. The stories tell us that saints who live as householders in the life and death world ruled by kings may attain Siva's deathless world through an *excess* of love, a *drunkenness*,that Siva intentionally creates to make them go berserk and commit acts of blood and death. In Navalar's terms, the Path of Action in the temple with its non-violent and bloodless carya and kriya please Siva, but the Path of Bhakti in the household and kingdom with its blood and death delights him even more. This inner conflict of the Tamil Saiva tradition is resolved only by Siva when he generates in his devotees the experience of anpu.

It is, after all, not the act of blood and death that gives Siva his satisfaction. It is the emotional intensity of anpu driven to the excess of blood and death that pleases himthe intensely deep and orgasmic feeling that emerges when, to paraphrase Valentine Daniel, pain passes into the anpu that is Siva.43 Blood and death in Tamil and Vedic thought are connected

with seed and birth, so that the blood of the sacrifice and the uterine blood of conception go hand-in-hand.44 This intense feeling of anpu for Siva, therefore, is potentially present both in bloody sacrifice and in sexual union, a fact that calls to mind the statement of a Kapalika sadhua member of that order of monks which specialized in lopping off pieces of themselves and the heads of others and in sexual union to attain purity, power, and moksawho said, "The bliss which becomes manifest through sexual union is the (true) form of Bhairava. The attainment of that (bliss) at death is moksa."45 But it is noteworthy that while the Nayanars find Siva in

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43. Saint Guard of the Family (Kulaccirai Nayanar), Pandyan prime minister, impales eight thousand Jainas for having reviled Siva and having defiled his monastery at Madurai. Photo by Dennis Hudson.

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blood and death, no story portrays them finding him in sexual union; in that respect, at least, they are not tantric.

Now, one question insists on emerging from this discussion. If the Nayanar is a mode of Siva in our midst, would he not cause enormous injury to Siva if he killed himself? Our final story is especially instructive in this matter. It is the story of Eripatta Nayanar, "Saint Cutting Devotion," and Pukalccola Nayanar, the "Celebrated Chola Saint." The Saint of Cutting Devotion used his battle-ax to chop up anyone who disrupted the slaves of Siva in their service. On the first day of Mahanavami, a festival for God and king, 46 a devotee was taking his usual basket of flowers to the Anilai Temple in the Kongu capital. The king's royal elephant, while rushing to its bath with its five grooms, seized the basket and scattered the flowers. The Saint of Cutting Devotion appeared on the scene, learned what had happened, took out after the elephant, chopped off its trunk, and chopped the five grooms to death. The Nayanar had defended bloodily the kingdom of Siva over against the encroachments of an earthly king represented by his elephant and grooms.

The significant twist in the story is that the king, too, is a Nayanar; and because the elephant and the groomsespecially during the Mahanavami festivalare extensions of himself as king, he feels that it is he who has injured Siva.

As soon as the "Celebrated Chola Saint" heard that his elephant and its grooms had been slaughtered, he rushed to the

spot with his army and found a single man standing there dressed in the garb of Siva. He realized that the elephant must have done something wrong to bring the saint to such anger and when the saint told him that the elephant had scattered the flowers of Siva and that the grooms had not stopped him and so he killed them all, the king grew anxious. Venerating the warrior-saint he said,

> It isn't enough to kill the elephant and the grooms for the grievous crime of harming the slaves of Siva. You must kill me too. But your own auspicious sword is more than I, a great criminal, deserve. It's not right to use it. Please use my own sword to kill me with.

And he held it out to him. Saint Cutting Devotion was astonished at the king's great love and hesitated to take the sword until he realized that the king might kill himself with it. The king then venerated the warrior-saint and said, "If this Siva bhakta kills me with the sword, my sin will be removed." But when Cutting Devotion heard that,

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he anxiously thought to himself,

> This celebrated Chola king hadn't the slightest sorrow when he learned why his royal elephant and its grooms died and he handed me his own sword and asked me to kill himand I meant to give him trouble! The only thing to do is to kill myself first.

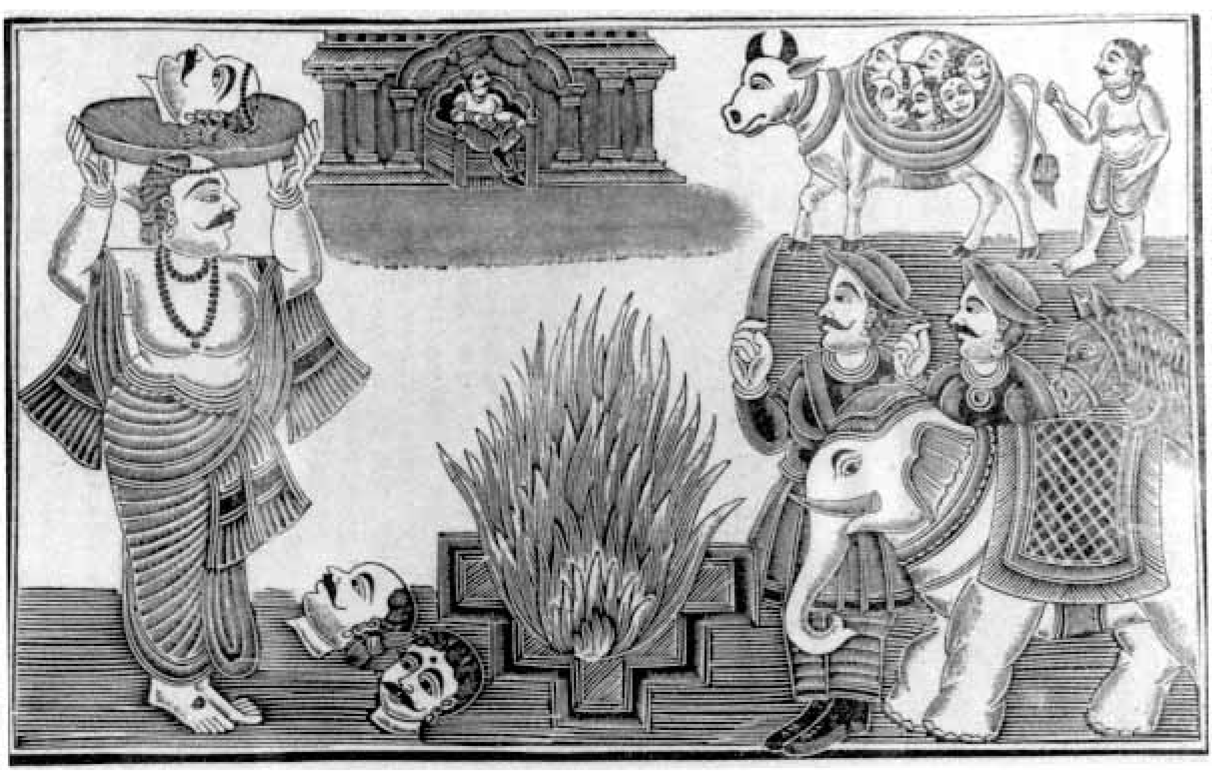
So Cutting Devotion proceeded to cut his own throat with the king's sword. Startled, the king quickly intervened, grabbed his arm and the sword, and stopped him (see plate 44).

I think we now have the answer as to why, if a Nayanar is a mode of Siva, he would kill himself. It is because a Nayanar sees only other slaves of Siva as Siva, he does not see himself that way. The king believed he would be purified if Saint Cutting Devotion slew him for it would actually be Siva's grace expressed as death. But Saint Cutting Devotion did not want the king to kill himself because he saw the king as Siva. This is the mystery of sharing anpu with Siva: Siva always appears as the other person whom one loves, even in sayujyam. He never appears to oneself *as* oneself. Only others can recognize oneself as Siva. Even if a Nayanar looked in a mirror he would see Siva in the costume he wears and himself as the one who wears it. Thus these two Nayanars, each thinking himself the criminal and the other Siva, prevented each other from committing bloody suicide. By killing themselves they meant to purify themselves of crimes against Siva; by preventing the suicide of the other they meant to keep Siva from harm.

The story ends suggestively. Siva resurrects the elephant and the five grooms and they go on to the palace with the king. The scattered flowers return to the basket and the devotee continues on to the temple. Saint Cutting Devotion continues in his warrior-like service to Siva and eventually becomes the chief of Siva's assembly in Kailasa. And the Celebrated Chola Saint finally does manage to kill himself. One day, when his soldiers brought back the heads of those they had killed while attacking a ruler who refused to send the king tribute, the king spotted one head with matted locks on its top. He recognized it as the head of a slave of Siva andon the basis that the soldiers were extended modes of himselfhe realized immediately that he had only one option. After turning his kingdom over to his son, he put the head in a golden pot, put the pot on his head, circumambulated a blazing fire, and while uttering the Five-Syllable Mantra, stepped into the fire and emerged in Siva's realm (see plate 45).



44. Saint Cutting Devotion (Eripatta Nayanar) cuts the trunk of the royal elephant and dismembers a groom (at the left) and then tries to slit his own throat (at the right). He is restrained by the king, Saint Celebrated Chola. Photo by Dennis Hudson.



45. Saint Celebrated Chola (Pukalccola Nayanar) sits as ruler and sees a basket of heads brought from battle(background); then, while royal officials watch, he carries on his head the head of a Siva devotee

found in the basket and prepares to immolate himself in a fire (foreground). Photo by Dennis Hudson.

It is significant that the king performed a mode of self-immolation prescribed for a wife, especially a warrior's wife, when her husband has died away from home. 47 Holding a piece of his clothing or his body, she is to burn herself on a pyre. In this case the husband's corpse is represented by the bhakta's head in the golden pot and the wife is the king. Does this mean that we are to regard the anpu of the Nayanars as a version of pativrata, of absolute faithfulness to one's husband? If so, then the Nayanars, almost all of whom are male and householders, are masculine versions of a Tamil belief about women: Their loving faithfulness to their master gives them a sacred power that can be destructive or salvific. They are faithful to Siva in the same way their own wives are faithful to them. Siva, in turn, treats them in the same way they treat their own wivesas an extension of himself, as an instrument of his will, as a slave to do his bidding, as a means for achieving paroxysms of pleasure, and as a companion in sharing anpu.

E. Conclusion

This brings us back to our beginning. When Cekkilar composed the *Periya Puranam* to wean the Chola king away from the *Jivaka Cintamani*,he changed the flavor of erotic love, srngara rasa, into the flavor of devotional love, anpu rasa. He drew upon an old tradition of Saiva ecstasy, one that had developed, I suspect, from the intense flood of feeling generated deep in the psyche by the cult of blood and death as it had been filtered through Vedic and Agamic myths and practices. From the point of view of the Agamas, the crucial element that defined this blood-begotten ecstasy as divine rather than as demonic (or as secular psychosis) was its focus on the linga, or on the guru, or on the slaves of Siva. From the point of view of those in whom this ecstasy was begotten, it was the Siva of the Agamas who revealed himself in it.

Cekkilar also showed his king, Kulottunga II, that instead of looking forward to the end of his rule as the time for a full participation in the religious life, as Jivaka did in the *Cintamani*,his daily life in the midst of kingship would be sacred as long as the service of Siva's cult remained at its center. He provided the king with seventy-two concrete illustrations of what Krsna had taught Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

He illustrated one other belief as well. The idea that Siva's anpu transubstantiates the lover, as it did in the case of Kannappa Nayanar, explains the sense in which the king was himself Siva. The ancient idea of the king as god had continued among the medieval Cholas. By the seventh century it had emerged in iconography, for the Pallava

king Mahendravarma I, in his cave-temple in Trichy, had sculpted his own portrait as the face of Siva receiving the Ganges. His Pallava heirs, in their Somaskanda panels, portrayed themselves as Siva and their crown prince as Skanda. 48 And the Cholas built temples whose linga bore a title that referred simultaneously to Siva and to the kingRajarajesvara, for example, or Rajendracolisvara, or Gangaikondacolisvara.49

The implication of this idea is that Siva dwells immanently in the mind and person of the king.50 Cekkilar explains that this is because of anpuan anpu that the king may consciously cultivate and/or that may be present in him by virtue of an initiation (diksa). The king is an extension of Siva in the same way the Nayanars are and thus his acts are, like theirs, the acts of Siva in this world. The king who is the slave of Siva is Siva to the world; all of his acts are the turning of himself with the puppet wheel Siva turns, even when those acts are violent and fanatical.

What fanatical acts did Kulottunga II perform out of devotion to Siva? The worshipers of Visnu from the Chola region remember two. While renovating the Chidambaram temple, he removed the icon of Visnu who reclined there and threw it in the sea.51 He also drew the blood of a devotee of Visnu. Seeking to make the Vaisnavas in Sri Rangam, the cultic rival to Chidambaram, acknowledge Siva as supreme, he summoned the famous scholar and devotee of Visnu, Ramanuja, to his court.52 When a surrogate for Ramanuja arrived, Kulottunga insisted that he proclaim in writing that Siva is the Supreme Lord. But the scholarly sadhu cunningly maintained his faithfulness to Visnu by writing a pun on the word "Siva" to make Visnu the Lord of Siva. Thinking perhaps of Kannappa Nayanar who had sacrificed his eyes to heal Siva, Kulottunga had the sadhu's eyes taken out, his attempt probably to purify the sadhu of his "blindness" and to heal

the injured Lord he deeply loved.

Notes

1. The fullest discussion of Cekkilar, on which the following is based, is given by Mu. Aranacalam, *Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru*: *Pannirantam Nurrantu*,2 vols. (Tiruccirrampalam-Mayuram: Kanti Vittiyalayam, 1973), vol. 1, 103-337. The dates for kings and temples, however, follow Michael W. Meister, ed., M. A. Dhaky coordinator, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture*: *South India*: *Lower Dravidadesa* (200 B.C.-A.D. 1324), Texts and Plates in 2 vols. (New Delhi:

American Institute of Indian Studies; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1983), where discussion of Kulottunga II is given in vol. I, 291 [cited henceforth as *Encyclopaedia]*.Traditional information about Cekkilar comes from the *Cekkilar Cuvamikal Puranam* written in one hundred and three verses by Umapati Sivacarya in the beginning of the fourteenth century. Cekkilar's given name was Arunmoli Tevar, but he is remembered by the name of his Velala lineage, Cekkilar.

2. The story is summarized by Appaswami Chakravarti, *Jaina Literature in Tamil*,Jñanapitha Murtidevi Granthamala: English Series 3, First Revised Edition (New Delhi: Bharatlya Jñanapitha Publication, 1974; first ed. 1941), 63-83. The number sixty-three assigned to the Nayanars is symbolic, for there are actually seventy-two, and one of that number consists of three thousand Brahmans known simply as "Those who live in Tillai," another name for Chidambaram. If one adds Siva as the sixty-forth Nayanar, one has a symbol of totality analogous to the sixty-four heroes whom the Jainas celebrate in their own "Great Purana," the *Mahapurana* or *Sri Purana*.

Puspadanta in 959-965 composed a *Mahapurana* in Apabhrama verse on the lives of the sixty-three Jaina heroes. Jinasenacarya and Gunabhadra composed the Sanskrit *Mahapurana* or *Trisastilaksana-Mahapurana* about the end of the ninth century (consisting of the *Adipurana* and the *Uttarapurana*).Camundaraya composed the Kannada version of the *Mahapurana* in 977. See Krishna Kanta Handiqui, *Yasastilaka and Indian Culture*: *Or, Somadeva*'*s Yasastilaka and Aspects of Jainism and Indian Thought and Culture in the Tenth Century* (Sholapur: Jaina Samskrti Samrakshaka Sangha, 1949), 3; Chakravarti, *Jaina Literature*,63-64, n. 2; and S. Vaiyapura Pillai in *Sri Puranam*,K. V. Venkatarajolu Reddiyar ed., Madras University Tamil Department Publication, No. 14, 2nd ed. (Madras: University of Madras, 1946), xi.

3. Michael Lockwood, *Mamallapuram and the Pallavas* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1982), 95-96.

4. In Tiruppantal. See K. Vellaivaranan, *Pannirutirumurai Varalaru*: *Irantam Pakuti*,Part II (8-12 Tirumuraikal) (Annamalaip Palkalaikkalakam, 1980), Appendix 2. The *Encyclopaedia* places this temple before 1000 but gives almost no information about it.

5. He may have included illustrations of more Nayanars, but the fresco paintings are destroyed. See *Encyclopaedia I*,238.

6. The Amrtaghatesvara temple in Melaikkatampur, built before 1113. See *Encyclopaedia*,296-97.

7. The Rajarajesvara temple, known as Airavatesvara temple, in Darasuram. See *Encyclopaedia*,299-304. *Vellaivaranan*, *Pannirutirumurai Varalaru*,II, Appendix 1, discusses these sculptures, with photos.

8. Arumuka Navalar, *Tiruttontar Periyapuranam*: *Itu karrorum marrorumakiya yavarukkum elitilé payanpatumporuttu*, *Nallur Arumukanavalaravarkal kattiya rupamakac ceytu* (Cennapattanam: Citamparam Caivappirakacavittiyacalait Tarumapari-

palakar, 1933 (15th printing], p. 2 of text [henceforth cited as *Tiruttontar Periyapuranam]*.

9. The twenty-four Nayanars who represent this fierce, violent, and fanatical devotion are listed here according to the

type of act they performed:

Injury or death ot oneself out of service to Siva's slaves: Enatinata, Meypporul, and Pukalccola were faithful to the ashes and beads that Siva's slaves wear; Tirukkuripputonta was faithful to the slaves' needs. *Injury or death to oneself* out of service to the linga: Kanampulla, Kaliya, Murtti, Kannappar, Eyarkon Kalikkama, and Sundaramurtti.

Injury to oneself and one's kin out of service to the slaves of Siva: Amarniti, Manakkañcara, and Kalikkama. *Injury to oneself and one's kin* out of service to the linga: Atipatta, Tirunilanakka, Arivattaya, Ceruttunai, Kalarcinka, and Candesvarar.

Killing one's kin out of service to the slave of Siva: Ciruttontar, Iyarpakai, and Kotpuli.

Injury or killing non-kin out of service to the slaves of Siva: Catti; out of service to the linga: Eripatta.

10. See Arumuka Navalar, *Periyapuranam enru valankukira Tiruttontarpuranam, Cekkilarnayanar arulcceytatu*: *Ikatu Yalppanattu Nallur Arumukanavalaravarkalal Karaikkalammaiyar Puranamvaraiyil paricotittu, ovvorupuranattukkum irutiyil avarkalal elutuppatta cucanttotu* (Cennapattanam: Merpatiyur Catacivappillai, 1884), citing this Saiva tradition on p. 130 [henceforth cited as *Tirruttontarpuranam]*.The story of Siva as the hunter occurs in *Mahabharata* 3.39-42; see J. A. B. van Buitenen, tr., *The Mahabharata*,vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 298-305.

11. These six orders of sadhus are: the Saiva Siddhantin, Pasupata, Vama, Bhairava, Mahavrata, and Kalamukha. See Vedajñana, *Saivagamaparibhasamañjari*: *Le Florilège de la Doctrine Sivaite*,Critical Edition, trans. and notes by Bruno Dagens, Publications de l'Institute Français d'Indologie, No. 60 (Pondicherry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1979), 68-69, n. 20. See also M. Winslow, *Winslow's A Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary* (1862; New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1981), 404: "*camayam*: *utcamayam*."

12. *Bhagavad Gita* VII.1; R. C. Zaehner, tr., *The Bhagavad Gita*: *With a Commentary Based on the Original Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

13. See Arumuka Navalar, *Tiruttontarpuranam*,pp. 128 and 132. The *Bhagavata Purana* 111.25.32-34 provides a similar discussion of this kind of bhakti: Swami Tapasyananda, tr., *Srimad Bhagavata*: *The Holy Book of God*,4 vols. (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1980-1982), 258-59.

14. All the Nayanar stories discussed here are based on their Tamil prose rendering by Arumuka Navalar, *Tiruttontar Periyapuranam*,with reference to the original poem by Cekkilar Cuvamikal, *Tiruttontarkal Carittiramennum Periyapuranam Vacanakaviyam*: *Tiruvuruvap patankalutan* (Madras: B. Irattina Nayakar and Sons, 1967).

15. The six illustrations for this article, representing a type of art commonly

found in Tamil Hindu books of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, are reproduced from *Periyapuranam Vacanakaviyam* [The *Periya Puranam* in Prose], published in Madras in 1967 by B. Ratna Nayakar Sons. The artist is not identified. The text of this version of the purana is largely that of Arumuka Navalar and the illustrations, like his text, may date from the later half of the nineteenth century. A valuable introduction to the style of art which, among other things, portrays several centers of interest simultaneously, is Judith Mara Gutman, *Through Indian Eyes*: *19th and 20th Century Photography from India* (New York: Oxford University Press; International Center of Photography, 1982).

16. Cf. David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*: *Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 158-59, discussing the story of Saint Hostile Nature as an allegory for the soul.

17. Arumuka Navalar, *Tiruttontarpuranam*,p. 4.

18. Emmons E. White, *The Wisdom of the Tamil People* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975), 58-70, gives his translation of this story from the *Periya Puranam* as "The Holy Hunter."

19. Arumuka Navalar, *Tiruttontarpuranam*,p. 130.

20. Glenn E. Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Siva*: *A Study of Manikkavacakar's Tiruvacakam* (Columbia, Missouri: South Asia Books, 1982), 180-94, discusses this same madness and possession with reference to Manikkavacakar.

21. The explanation in Navalar's prose retelling reads: "His entire nature is nothing less than the nature of love for us. All of his knowledge is knowledge of us. All of his deeds are done for our pleasure. The sandal on his foot that he uses to remove the flowers you place on our head gives us much more joy than even the foot of our son Subrahmanya. The water that he spits on us from his mouth, because it flows from the vessel made of love called his body, is purer to us than even the Ganges and all auspicious tirthas. The flowers that he brings tucked in his hair to adorn us, because they fall on us in the way his true love blossoms and falls, are in no way equalled by the flowers that Brahma, Visnu, and the other gods adorn us with. The meat that he prepares for us, because he melts it with love wondering if it is cooked tenderly and because he chews and tastes it with gentle feelings, is much sweeter to us than the oblations offered to us by those who perform the Vedic sacrifices. The words he speaks to us while standing in our presence, because they emerge with a pure love that knows no one else but us, are much more delicious to us than all the Vedas and hymns of praise that munis sing to us in exaltation."

22. Navalar's rendering of *Periya Puranam* 10.183.

23. *Bhagavad Gita* IX.26-34. Zaehner's translation.

24. Tirumula Nayanar, *Tirumantiram* 257; see *Tirumantiram*: *Muvayiram*,2 vols., P. Iramanata Pillai elutiya villakkamum; A. Citamparanar elutiya kurippum (Madras: Tirunelveli, Tenintiya Caivacittanta Nurpatippuk Kalakam, Limited, 1979, 1980).

25. Arumuka Navalar, *Tiruttontarpuranam*,p. 129.

26. *Bhagavad Gita* XVIII.62. Zaehner's translation.

27. For a discussion of this mad behaviour, see Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Siva*,144-49.

28. Arunacalam, *Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru*,227-28.

29. The ninth century Pallava sculpture of Kannappa Nayanar, in fact, places him among Siva's ganas. See Lockwood, *Mamallapuram and the Pallavas*,95-96.

30. Sundaramurtti Nayanar, for example, was a reborn resident of Kailasa. In this respect the Nayanars differ from the Sri Vaisnava Alvars, all of whom are believed to be avatars of aspects of Visnu.

31. Arumuka Navalar describes this as "Guru Puja" in *Tiruttontar Periyapuranam*,22-24. Arunacalam discusses it as "Mahesvara Puja" in *Tamil Ilakkiya Varalaru*,328-39, where he also describes the popular celebration of "Saint Little Servant," Ciruttontar Nayanar.

32. E. Valentine Daniel, *Fluid Signs*: *Being a Person the Tamil Way* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

33. The *Siva Purana* provides an instructive illustration of the notion of the extended self in the story of Sati, Siva's wife. She has to respond to her father's verbal abuse of her husband, an enormous injury to him, she thinks. So she decides to kill herself, she says, because her body has become drenched with sin by hearing these terrible words, just as her father has by speaking them. She could purify both of them if she cut off his tongue, she notes, but she is not strong enough and he, after all, is her father. So she cleanses herself of his crime (which is now hers by absorption through the ears) by setting her polluted body on fire through Yoga, turning it to ash. About twenty thousand of her attendants follow her by cutting off their own limbs, heads, or faces. Her father she leaves to be "purified" by Siva himself. See *Siva Purana*: *Rudrasamhita* 29.38-41; 30.20-21, in J. L. Shastri, ed., The *Siva Purana*,tr. A. Board of Scholars, 4 vols., Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology Series (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969-1970), vol. 1, 412, 416.

There are two explanations for this behaviour of Sati and her attendants, I think. One is that all of them had heard her

father's reviling words and thus were drenched with his crime, but not being able to cut out his tongue, they cleansed themselves through self-slaughter. The story itself makes this explanation obvious. The other less obvious one is that Sati viewed herself as both an extension of her father and of her husband, while her attendants viewed themselves as extensions of her. Her father's words had injured Siva, though he did not actually hear them, because Siva was represented by her; but since she also represented her father, his verbal injury of Siva was also hers. Extended into two different males, she represented both. She could cleanse both herself and her father by cutting out his tongue, but she was both weak and his daughter and it was out of the question. Her alternative was to burn up her

outer body drenched with the sin to purify her inner body, unlinking herself from her father while reaffirming her link with her husband. Her attendants, who shared in her pollution, cleansed themselves by hacking themselves to death, thereby reaffirming their link to her, and through her to her husband.

34. George L. Hart, III, "The Little Devotee: Cekkilar's Story of Ciruttontar," in M. Nagatomi, B. K. Matilal, J. M. Masson, and E. Dimock, eds., *Sanskrit and Indian Studies* (New York: Reidel Publishing Company, 1979), 217-36, translates and discusses this popular story. Asim Roy discusses a Muslim parallel to it in *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 245-48.

35. Valentine Daniel discusses the Tamil perception of these distinctions in the "body" in *Fluid Signs*,278-87.

36. The story is of Siva as Bhairava who chopped off Brahma's fifth head and had to perform the Kapalika sadhana as penance. See *Siva Purana*: *Satarudrasamhita* 8 in Shastri, ed., *The Siva Purana*,vol. 3, 1097-1110. See also E. Visuvalingam and Lorenzen in this volume.

37. Somesvara I performed *paramayoga* due to an incurable disease. See *Encyclopaedia I*,226.

38. See George L. Hart, III, "The Nature of Tamil Devotion," in Madhav M. Deshpande and Peter Edwin Hook, eds., *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India*,Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, No. 14 (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Michigan, 1979), 11-33; and Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*,chapter 3.

39. J. C. Heesterman, "The Case of the Severed Head," *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 45-58.

40. In the description of Indra's festival in the *Cilappatikaram*,warriors sacrifice their heads in the temple and hunter-warriors offer theirs to Durga. See Ilango Adigal, *Shilappadikaram* (*The Ankle Bracelet*),tr. Alain Danielou (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1965), 19-20, 83. E. A. Gait mentions human sacrifices in Tanjore: "Human Sacrifice (Indian)," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*,ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908-1927), vol. 4 (1914), 850a.

41. Archaeological excavations of the lingam at Gudimallam (a shrine near the Kalahasti mountain where Kannappa Nayanar sacrificed animals and his own eyes to the lingam) reveals bones around the lingam, offered to Siva who is portrayed on the lingam as an animal sacrificer in the Vedic tradition. See I. K. Sarma, "New Light from Gudimallam Excavation," *Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute Series*,No. 11, Proceedings of the Seminar on "Symbolism in Temple Art and Architecture" held in February, 1981, ed. K. K. A. Venkatachari (Bombay: Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, 1982), 31-50.

42. Or, an "irredeemable contradiction" as he names it on p. 58 of Heesterman, *Inner Conflict*.

43. Daniel analyzes a contemporary experience of this in *Fluid Signs*,268-70. Animal slaughter and eros is also brought out in the story of Krsna slaying seven bulls to win Pinnai as his bride. A thirteenth century commentator on the phrase from an Alvar poem that says of Krsna, "He seized seven bulls," observes:

He expects in the next moment to grasp her and therefore, just as if he is embracing her already, he joins himself

to the bulls. Because killing them is the means by which he obtains her, he is joined to their horns (*kompu*)just as if he were united with this girl slim as a twig (*kompu*),and he enjoys it.

Slightly revised translation from Dennis Hudson, "Pinnai, Krishna's Cowherd Wife," in John Stratton Hawley and Donna Marie Wulff, eds., *The Divine Consort*: *Radha and the Goddesses of India*,Berkeley Religious Studies Series (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1982), 251.

44. See Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*,93-109.

45. Quoted by David N. Lorenzen, *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas*: *Two Lost Saivite Sects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 91.

46. See Burton Stein, "Mahanavami: Medieval and Modern Kingly Ritual in South India," in Bardwell L. Smith, ed., *Essays on Gupta Culture* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 67-92.

47. See Edward Thompson, *Suttee*: *A Historical and Philosophical Enquiry into the Hindu Rite of Widow-Burning* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1928).

48. Lockwood, *Mamallapuram and the Pallavas*,62-73; and Frederick M. Asher, "Historical and Political Allegory in Gupta Art," in Smith, ed., *Essays on Gupta Culture*,53-66.

49. Lockwood discusses the intended ambiguity of these titles in *Mamallapuram and the Pallavas*,84-85. Rajaraja I built the Rajarajesvara *vimana* of the Brhadesvara complex in Tanjore in 1003-1010. Rajendra I (1012-1044) built the Rajendracolisvara or Gangaikondacolisvara temple in Gangaikondacolapuram. See *Encyclopaedia* I, 225, 234.

50. This is the way Lockwood interprets Mahendravarma's phrase, "bore on his head God immanent." See his *Mamallapuram and the Pallavas*,p. 66.

51. Ramanuja later retrieved it, tradition says, and installed it in the temple at Tirupati until a Vijayanagara king returned it to Chidambaram. See *Encyclopaedia*,291.

52. T. N. Subramanian plausibly identifies the "Kulottunga" of Sri Vaisnava tradition with Kulottunga II. See John Braisted Carman, *The Theology of Ramanuja*: *An Essay in Interreligious Understanding* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), 44-45.

14
From Robber Baron to Royal Servant of God? Gaining a Divine Body in South India 1

Joanne Punzo Waghorne

In 1882, His Highness Raja Ramacandra Tontaiman of Pudukkottai, the only remaining princely state in Tamilnadu, took the title "Brihadambal Das," the servant of the goddess Brihadambal.2 With the open prodding of his Tanjore-born wife and a silent but sure nod from his Brahman dewan, the raja took the last step in the long process by which this openly Kallar caste royal family attempted to secure an honorable place among Hindu rajas who reigned in India. In the nineteenth century the title of "servant" of God increasingly carried status among human kings just as surely as it made a demon into a divine devotee in the world of the gods. The once low caste rajas of Puri, although now without a domain, were greatly respected with their title of "servant" of Jagannath.3 Within the century, the rajas of Travancore, also Sudra, at best, in origin, had taken a similar title in relationship to their tutelary deity.4 Like the tamed and devoted demon servants who had a place at the feet of God in many nearby temples, rajas of questionable caste origins, and even more questionable pasts, found both legitimation and a sure share of divinity as the first among the servants of their God.

Raja Ramacandra's action was almost predictable as a logical extension of the kind of orthodoxy that the bhakti movement defined for South India after the tenth century. As Madeleine Biardeau has shown, bhakti provided the means of moving local deities with a taste for meat and a liking for blood into a new definition of Hindu orthodoxy.5

The relationship between God and the outsider/sinner was set. The demon was made to realize his dependency on God and to acknowledge with gratitude his place at the Lord's feet as a devotee-servant. The demon lost his own wayward, but once independent power, for a share of God's own divinity. A similar process operated to integrate rajas of low caste origin, and therefore often of scandalous habits, into an acceptable orthodoxy. During the turmoil of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the old chieftains of the outlying regions of India rose to become rajas through their military support of various contenders for paramount power in the more settled regions. The British used the fluid situation and followed an ad hoc policy to maintain the hill kingdoms as buffer states and to annex the settled agricultural belts to their domain. As a result, few of the remaining ruling rajas of the nineteenth century could truly claim Ksatriya status. These hill lords with their odd social, political, and religious habits pleased neither the Brahmans nor the respectable gentry of the established agricultural areas. They sought legitimation as they moved into more established regions or as they turned their own hill countrywillingly or because of pressure from the now paramount Britishfrom a confederacy of clans into a royal domain. By the late eighteenth century, the royal houses of Tanjore, Nagpur, Mysore, Travancore, Hyderabad and others in South India were now descended from Sivaji's hearty Maratha freebooters, Muslim soldiers of fortune, or the older Tamil palaiyakkarsPolegars as the British called themwho had long ruled the Tamil backlands as chieftains of the cattle-raising/cattle-rustling castes. 6 The founding legends of such royal houses frequently cast the family patriarch as a gem-in-the-rough who came to royalty through power which in later generations was sanctified in devotion to the state deity.7 Mark Wilks in his 1817 collection of the founding legends of Mysore, for example, described generations of the family as powerful robber barons. He makes special mention of "Canterava Narsa Raj" who established the worship of a state deity and established the royal celebration of Dasara. Wilks offered the typical terse comment of an eighteenth-century rationalist on this would-be pious prince: "He is of course the idol of his Brahman historians, whose system of ethics is not disturbed by any troublesome reflections on the simple transfer of property, by which the fruits of industry are transformed into pious plunder."8

This was the historical antecedent inherent in Raja Ramacandra's quest for legitimacy. The Tontaiman were classic palaiyakkars whose family's roots were in the free-wheeling days when plunder made wealth, and wealth made magnanimity, and magnanimity made friends

of much needed troops, of the Brahmans, and of the gods. But as a young ruler, Raja Ramacandra had not been a paragon of either the coming Victorian virtures, or the old give-and-take of the Kallar clansmen. He had perhaps over-patronized the Brahmans by employing them in his library and accounts office in great numbers, and by paying for elaborate rituals. In short he *paid* in the manner of the eighteenth century but did not pay heed as the coming age of ethics would demand. With an old palaiyakkar's taste for jewels and little sense of economy, and with a budget stretched too thin between old retainers and his desire for royal splendor in an expanded arena of the British Raj, he almost lost his throne first to a rebellion of his own Kallar militia and later to a threatened take-over by a British administration anxious to keep good order with or without him. 9 Old and seemingly chastened, he sought new status and expiation as his Divine Lady's devotee.

But this new effort of the Pudukkottai raja to secure a place among the new all-India orthodox was not a resounding success. Perhaps the Tontaiman family's shady past as members of the supposed robber caste of Kallars10 was too recent to have slid out of common memory. Descriptions of Pudukkottai just ten years previous to the raja's reformation as a servant of God portrayed a domain with robbers lurking on roads overgrown with thorns "grown in enormous bushes sheltering venomous reptiles."11 The British, therefore, quickly concluded that this raja was making a pretentious bid for aggrandizement of his power and objected that he was overstepping his bounds by imitating the practices of the greater court of Travancore. Much quiet politics was needed to secure the government's permission to take the title.12 The general public outside of Pudukkottai likely remained similarly unimpressed. Today among the more orthodox outside of the Pudukkottai district, the rajas of Pudukkottai remain "products of the British" and not Hindu kings of unquestioned distinction. Perhaps the rajas of Pudukkottai hesitated too long to take up their role as devoted servants to be taken seriously in this exalted yet humble position of sharing in the divinity of an overarching and superior God.

In spite of Ramacandra's dubious success in the title role of the servant of God, the Tontaimans did not fail to gain a serious religious role within their own kingdom.13 The process of securing religious legitimation began in earnest during the long reign of Vijaya Raghunatha Raya Tontaiman, 1730-1769. The raja had emerged from a succession dispute with the question of his legitimacy to settle with a more than ready sword. While the rival to the throne had been installed in the temple of Kudumiyamalai, as was the family tradition,

a hasty ceremony for Vijaya was performed in front of the image of Brihadambal in the Tirugokarnam temple. Thus did the great goddess enter into a serious relationship with the Tontaimans. But unlike his nineteenth century progeny, Vijaya Raghunatha did not propose to become the goddess's "servant." 14 This earlier raja may well have had something much more radical in mind for his position in the world of divine powers.

The eighteenth century was not the nineteenth. In spite of all the talk of reform, the religious movements of nineteenth century India operated on the larger imperial logic that a return to "origins," Sanskrit scripture in the case of India and Biblical text in England, was the best means of "reforming" contemporary popular practices. The nineteenth century in both India and Britain sought the legitimation of holy texts and long-dead holy men. But in the previous century, few dared to define a Brahmanical orthodoxy as the route to divine or human power when a Muslim Nawab of Arcot reigned as the tutelary overlord of the Carnatic and when the actual power supporting the throne was the British East India Trading Company made up of post-enlightenment rational pragmatists whose adherence to orthodox Christianity was rarely even nominal. The eighteenth century was the era of men like George Patterson who was employed as a councilor by the Nawab of the Carnatic. In his diary of an official journey through South India in 1774, Patterson freely portrayed one missionary as a buffoon while a century later this person was virtually canonized as a heroic preacher of the faith.15 But then the eighteenth century was not a time for the prudent to espouse the staid ancientness of orthodoxy. It was a time for the nonorthodox to move freely in and out of power.

Borders, both social and political, were fluid in the eighteenth century in South India. Hindu rajas proudly wore the badges of honor given by Muslim, British, French, and indigenous rulers. This was a time when freebooter Muslims, Hindus, and tribals became kings, when daring "shopkeepers" were made British lords, and when the commandment to know one's place was not taken too seriously either theologically or politically. Brahmans took employment with petty rajas whom they carefully treated as kings with that seeming disregard for logic that annoyed Mark Wilks and others like him.16 But the eighteenth century British too had begun to purchase the legitimacy that adhered to the Brahmans by employing them as clerks and later granting them many important offices in the Presidency. Yet while the Brahmans continued to find a place in the new early British order, they did not command the ideological, theological, or political order of the day. Gone

was the careful bowing to Brahmanical tradition that marked the previous centuries in places like Tanjore, whose earlier complex struggles to attain orthodoxy are the focus of David Shulman's recent book on kingship in South India. Such times as the eighteenth century, as Shulman also suggests, 17 may have allowed the ancient indigenous Tamil culture(s) free play to offer its own rules on the acquisition of power as a modus operandi for the other outsiders who had come to its door. And, not yet apparent in the eighteenth century were the forces that would bring a new kind of orthodoxy back to both India and Britain, and which would send Ramacandra Tontaiman scurrying for a place among the "servants" of God, when a century earlier his great ancestor, as we will see, took nothing less than a place among the gods.

In many respects, the British and their dependent Hindu rajas of the nineteenth century had much in common with the period that preceded the freewheeling times of Vijaya Raghunatha Tontaiman. Myths with timeless messages, texts claiming eternal relevance, concern with a carefully formulated overarching order were the stuff that satisfied the needs of an imperial claim to universal power. But when times are locally made and locally defined as in South India after the demise of both the Vijayanagar, the late Chola dynasties, and even of nominal Moghul rule, kings may take another road to securing legitimacy both theologically and politically. Ramacandra Tontaiman's claim to the title of a divine devotee is predictable for his day, but the more interesting issues rest with the earlier Tontaiman. The world of Vijaya Raghunatha Tontaiman was filled with the kind of events, and even the kind of myths, that indeed altered and illuminated his times

and perhaps any time in South India when universality gives way to particularity and to an earthy and unabashed grab at powerdivine or human. It is then that the divine and the human meet in ways that scandalize the theology of more ordered times.

The reign of Vijaya Raghunatha fortunately has left two "myths" that each tell the story of the Tontaiman family's rise to power and of Vijaya Raghunatha's own hard road to the expiations of his past sins. The events in the first narrative cycle center on Vijaya Raghunatha's conversion as the devotee, not of the goddess, but of a naked ascetic, Sadasiva Brahma. These events are carefully dated to 1738 but the tale remained oral until the twentieth century version took pamphlet and history book form.18 The second narrative put into elegant courtly verse as the *Tondaman Vamsavali* near the end of Raya Vijaya's reign, relates the genealogy and the history of the Tontaimans

including the grand tale of the first of these Kallar chieftains to secure the status of independent rule. Neither of the two narratives is "myth" in any classical sense. The line between "myth" and "history," as would be expected, is especially thin in the origin stories of the royal lines of these hinterland districts. Here, as Nicholas Dirks points out in his analysis of Pudukkottai's family history as told in *vamsavali* form, "Anthropologists must realize both that myths have histories and that they are histories." 19 Important also is the Tamil classification of its own "popular" literature. The ballads of the hinterland rajas, like the rajas of Pudukkottai, are classified most often as *varalaru*,which is used to this day as the word "history" in text books. Interestingly, the tales of gods seem to be lumped into those of kings with no literary distinction made, for example, between tales of the love between young women and God or between lovely maidens and the king.20 In this sense, the stories of gods are presented as "histories" just like the tales of men. Here is an interesting reversal between myth and history. It seems that while gods fit into the world's history, humans do not fit themselves into myth. The medium in which these Pudukkottai traditions originate fits the nature of the special kind of divine-human relationships which the tales helped to create and to advocate.

A. The Sadasiva Legend: King, Brahman, Ascetic, God and Goddess

The narrative of Vijaya Raghunatha's first meeting with his future guru, Sadasiva Brahma, is part of the folklore and history of Pudukkottai. The story is central to kingship there because it relates the origins, not of the kingdom itself, but of the beginning of the religious "blessing" of the state which insured its fertility and growth. Like the stories of the demon who submits to God, this narrative emphasizes the raja's state of sin and the expiation of that sin by the good graces of the Brahman ascetic. The story has many oral and written variants, but the version told by S. Radhakrishna Aiyar in *A General History of Pudukkottai* is the most accessible and widely known.

Once the ascetic Sadasiva Brahma, after renouncing worldly life, could not renounce his love of talking. The strong advice of his guru led Sadasiva into a lifelong vow of silence. He is said to have wandered naked and utterly silent through the forests of South India. Ramakrishna Aiyar continues the story as follows in his stylized nineteenth century prose.

> In 1738 or just before, Vijaya Raghunatha Raya Tondaiman had the good fortune to receive spiritual instruction from Sadasiva Brahma. It is not definitely known where the meeting took place between the ruler and the Yogi. Some say that the Tondaiman met him in the forests near Sivagnanapuram, a little to the south-east of the Pudukkottai town where the ruler often lived. . . . The Tondaiman must, immediately on seeing the Yogi, have known him to be a great sage, and made obeisance to him requesting spiritual instruction. The sage thereupon wrote on the sand by his side the Dakshinamurti Mantram, i.e., the prayer to Shiva in his form as the *south-faced* preceptor of the Rishis, and also a direction that the Tondaiman should have as his spiritual Guru Mahabashyam Gopalakrishna Sastriar, a class-mate of the Yogi in his boy-hood.
>
> Gopalakrishna Sastriar was sent for, was made the Palace Guru. . . . The Tondaiman was required by the Guru, for the expiation of his past sins and for the security of the future welfare and prosperity of the State, to institute the worship of Dakshinamurti in the Palace and to arrange for the annual conduct of the *Navaratri* or Dassara

festival, when Lakshmi, Durga and Sarasvati were to be worshiped and a large number of Brahmans were to be fed and given doles of rice and money, etc., and for the distribution of *Svayampakam* (rice and other articles required for a Hindu meal) to a number of Brahmins every day and to all girls that might apply therefore on Friday. . . .

Sadasiva Brahma, after the incident referred to above, again wandered where he liked and ultimately sank into eternal repose at Nerur near Karur. A few days before he closed his earthly career, he . . . asked the inhabitants of Nerur to have a pit ready for his Samadhi, in which was to be buried a *bana lingam* (a white stone representing the essence of Shiva). . . . A temple was built by the Tondaiman over his tomb, which was endowed with two villages in the Tirumayyam Taluk by the Tondaiman. 21

All of these charities and festivals were maintained until 1945 when the celebration of Dasara was cut back in the name of both reform and economy. Many people in Pudukkottai blame this rash action for the loss of the state's sovereignty just three years later.

Certainly on first reading this narrative seems to fit neatly into the pattern of many classical Hindu myths which center on the relationship between the key characters of king, Brahman, and ascetic, the subject of much recent discussion initiated by Louis Dumont and followed up by Veena Das, J. C. Heesterman, and T. N. Madan.22 There is a clear interdependence established between the ruler and the

Brahmans through the mediation of an ascetic. In good classical form, the Brahmans relieve the king of his evil by accepting his food as an expiation for sin. In oral versions of the story, the king's sins are related to his self-polluting but necessary acts of killing, especially during the civil wars in which Vijaya Raghunatha had emerged as a raja of importance through his support of the East India Company and its candidate for succession to the rule of the Carnatic. 23 The raja himself had won his own power through a year of interfamilial war in Pudukkottai. Much like the lingering myth of the evil King Vena which Wendy O'Flaherty traced from the Veda to the late Puranas and David Shulman found again in Tamilnadu,24 this story on the surface tells of the purification of a fierce warrior-king now settling into righteous rule.

In this story, however, the importance of the roles of the purifying God who grants salvation and the righteous Brahman are eclipsed by the yogi who actually established a series of analogous relationships between king, Brahman, and ascetic, and the gods whose roles are shared, swapped, and even duplicated among both human and divine participants. Sadasiva Brahma as yogi is also Brahman *and* god *and* king. His asceticism is hardly quiescent. He is a power-house of energythe kind of creative energy that Frédérique Marglin has classified among those forms of divine "power" in India to which each person "has access by actions in this life"25 and not by right of caste birth.

Thus here the naked ascetic, because of his vow of silence, cannot verbally articulate his position. Instead he must, like the star of a silent movie, act with all the more energy in the key parts of this drama. Like a *king*,Sadasiva Brahma wields power through action. There is a Tamil version of the story that has Sadasiva worshiping the goddess at Tirugokarnam with flowers and a gift of golden beads.26 Here in another role reversal Sadasiva acts as if he were the king, because the care, dressing, and feeding of the goddess was a royal duty for this state temple. But he also maintains his role as a Brahman. His caste friend substitutes for his presence as the raja's Brahman teacher in the palace while he remains in the forest as a perfect ascetic. This single actor plays the roles of "Brahman, King, and Sanyasi" which Veena Das has defined as the key to the conceptual order of Hinduism.27

But Sadasiva Brahma is not alone in his capacity to wear many garbs of power. Even the form of Lord Siva as preceptor to the gods is the perfect analogue to Sadasiva's own position as Brahman, ascetic, and king. Siva's own asceticism is confirmed by his position as guru to the gods and by his separation from female divinity within the

sacred geography of the capital city of Pudukkottai. In his small temple placed inside the palace, Siva is not accompanied by his great consort. The goddess Brihadambal, the great Sakti, lives in a temple several miles away in Tirugokarnam. Although this great temple was once dedicated to Siva, he is now overshadowed by the image of the goddess. 28 His

presence in this state temple is in the aniconic form of the linga. The raja was thus brought into separate types of relationships with Siva and Sakti. His relationship with the goddess is established, as ordered by Sadasiva, through Dasara which by this time was an orthodox ritual within South India. It is also possible to say, à la Shulman, that Siva is also brought into a safe relationship with his otherwise overpowering wife. However, as the occupant of the temple that Sadasiva had established for him, Siva sits as the lord's Lord within the palace grounds right under the Durbar Hall where the king officially sat in state. But again the entire reaffirmation of king-ascetic-Brahman roles for the god is affected through the ironically more important human guruthe stage manager and script writer for this royal play.

Notice that the emphasis on the ascetic is not the only audacious "mixing" of roles. By the logic of the myth, the king also plays the dual role of ascetic, and godthe king's position as a Brahman is not apparent in this myth but can be inferred in descriptions of the structure of the royal court.29 In the Tamil temple myths, Siva tames and then cares for his aggressive and dangerous bride.30 Here, however, Siva is made to sit alone in the king's palace while the king now fills in for both the ascetic and the absent God. A modern Tamil biography of Sadasiva has Raja Vijaya Raghunatha as a serious ascetic even before his meeting with Sadasiva. "Although of royal lineage, he preferred solitude and prayer in the forests of Tiruvaranulam."31 The children of the state were instructed in their history text that the raja "built himself a lonely home in the Sivagnana-puram jungle ["the city of the knowledge of Shiva"] to the south of town, where he spent days and nights in prayer and study."32 During Dasara the Tontaiman rajas always maintained a fast and were supposed to live secluded during the ten days of the festival. Thus the king took on the yogi's role as well as casting himself as the meditative Siva. A miniature painting from the Saivite court of the Raja of Mundi in the Punjab hills could so easily be the raja of Pudukkottai in a striking example of the Hindu hill lord as the ascetic god-king ornamented with royal turban, tiger skins, and Siva's third eye on his forehead.33 A British account of a Dasara in another state relates that the "Maharaja is supposed by many of his subjects to have reached, temporarily, a state of semi-divinity

as a result of his austerities." 34 But unlike Sadasiva Brahma, and even unlike the God, the king can act as the goddess's "husband" because he is not sworn to permanent celibacy nor to permanent fasting. This was made apparent during the Dasara processions when the image of Brihadambal was accompanied by the raja of Pudukkottai, who was also carried in a palanquin. The god is conspicuously absent from the festivities as his divine image simply stays at home in the palace while the king goes out with his wife!

The action of the tale, then, is shared between two human figures, the king and the ascetic. And, both finally share a particularly interesting end as images in a temple. The point is obvious for Sadasiva whose remains form the foundation for a temple which traditionally would have included his image, yet the same metamorphosis happened to the king. Witnesses to the Dasara ceremony attest that the king was carried during the Dasara procession in exactly the same manner as was the image of the goddess. He stood absolutely still, covered with garlands, his hands folded. Here the raja's pose is much like that of the saints in the many temple processions who have become themselves images for worship.35 The sight of the king gave darsan just as does the sight of any divine image. Thus both the raja and his spiritual teacher have not simply become divine, they have become divine images!

Thus all the characters in this myth live out their earthly life as *icons*.Siva lives in a new icon body within the palace. Sakti will be worshiped carefully in many icons during Dasara. Sadasiva Brahma is housed in his own temple, and the king will take up his role as icon during the very festivals that his Brahman guru instituted. The more orthodox bhakti motifs in the myth have been themselves englobed by the almost alchemic formula that embodied god eventually equals icon. But Pudukkottai did not invent this formula nor the theological embarrassment to orthodox Hinduism that went with it. Pious texts from Madurai and nearby Tanjore collected at the turn of the eighteenth century provide examples of the king's close affinity to the divine image in the temple. In the Mackenzie collection in London, texts collected and translated into English by Brahman clerks for the East India Company do not fail to mention the still famous story of the king of Madurai who perfected himself in all of the Brahmanical sciences culminating in the mastery of dance so that he could imitate his divine lord, Siva. But when the king could no longer stand on one foot like the divine icon, the embodied god reversed his own position so that his royal devotee could use the other foot.36 Here the king's attempt to make his own body into an image of the divine image-body is

sanctioned by god's grace. In yet another story collected from Tanjore in 1804, Raja Rajendra Chola becomes irate when one of the uncouth kings from Andhra actually reveals a third eye.

> One day Rajendra seeing his figure in a painting fell into a sudden rage exclaiming as he pointed with his finger "Wretch! do you flatter yourself that you have three eyes equal to the God of my adoration." Having said this, he darted his finger at one of the eyes of the picture and at the same time the third eye was broken: from that day he [the Andhra king] became subject to Rajendra. 37

This story was in Marathi and was translated by "A Maratta Brahmin" from Tanjore. These Brahmans had come with Sivaji's forces into Tanjore less than a century earlier. The royal house of Tanjore at this time was not Chola, but obviously intended to claim that status by out-orthodoxing those Andhra kings who had kept their hinterland ways. This sermon was, ironically, condemned as it admitted the close relationship between icon and king. It is an icon of the Andhra king that Rajendra held in his hands and that was as much a form of the errant king's body as the divine icon was of the god's. Paintings of the rajas of the Punjab hills from the daring eighteenth century still proudly portrayed the king with the third eye of Siva. The theological tug-of-war between the supremacy of the king as icon and the embodied god seems a struggle with some push, much pull, but with no clear wins for either side. Yet no matter how rough the play, no one let go of this bond that connected king to God.

There exists within this legend yet another set of paradoxes for orthodox Hinduism, even for orthodox bhakti. It is not the king's unscathed righteousness that wins him divine status but rather his sins. In this sense, the categories of bhakti are present. God does care for the sinner more than the righteous, for sin gives God the opportunity to exhibit his divine grace. Yet in Pudukkottai the process has some vital variations. The Dasara festival is a grand expiation of the king's "sins," and yet at the same time this festival ensures the kingdom's prosperity. Expiation for royal "sins" results not in the simple forgiveness that would be expected for sins of disobedience, nor in a purifying of the raja, nor in the intervention of God and the flow of divine grace. Certainly the raja must set up the worship of both Siva and his consort, but the energy from the expiation is not presented as a direct gift of the gods. The raja, with his luxurious dress in close relationship with his direct opposite, the naked ascetic, creates the

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kingdom's fertility which flows from naked ascetic to the splendidly dressed royal "sinner," and from king to the kingdom at large. The raja's sins appear almost material in naturea kind of base ingredient necessary to very substantive blessings. The process of transmutations and transformations, then, dominates the issue of the king's "evil" in Pudukkottai. When viewed in the context of the myth of the legitimation of kingship, the story of Sadasiva Brahma and the raja, the transformation process becomes a process in which both human-body and god-body come to take the *same* form as icons. The catalyst is "sin."

B. The *Tontaiman Varalaru*: Tigers, Panthers, Elephants, and Kings

In Pudukkottai no one is the least surprised if questioned about the historical origins of the Tontaiman's rise to royal status. The question makes perfect sense here in an area where families could rise to royal power and fall back into commonness within a matter of decades. Royalty has a beginning and an end here, and stories of the rise and fall of just about everybody were the stuff that made folk legends in these arid regions of Tamilnadu. While the origin of the kingdom's prosperity and of the expiation of the king's sins adopted an overt Brahmanical and Sanskritic idiom for its covert purposes, the type of continually forming "history" of the actual rise of the Tontaimans to royal power openly reflects both the content and the idiom of Tamil folk culture.

Stories explaining the end of Tontaiman power in 1948 are just beginning to take shape, but a complete cycle of origin legends exists in text from as early as the eighteenth century and orally into the present. The basic scenario has remained stable with varied delicacy and tone added in the different tellings. A person close to the royal family told the tale with great flourish.

> The Tontaimans were elephant trainers in the armies of the Vijayanagar empire who came south from Andhra Pradesh and settled in this region in a place which they called Ambukkovil, "the palace of compassion." They were chieftains at that time and began to gain a good reputation for wisely settling disputes. One day the king of the Vijayanagar empire was traveling through the Ambukkovil area on a pilgrimage to the Ramesvaram Temple

> when one of his elephants turned wild and began to ravage the countryside. The king sent drummers to warn the people to get out of the way. When the drummers came to Ambukkovil, the Tontaiman

> asked how could a king be so weak as not to be able to tame his own elephants and keep them under control? The Tontaiman went straightaway to complain to the king who told the Tontaiman that if he could tame the elephant, he would be granted honors and a title. But, if he could not, he would be executed. The Tontaiman located the elephant and tricked it into flinging its tusks into a sand bank while he cleverly leaped on its back. The Tontaiman rode the elephant, now quite tame, back to the king. For this act, he was granted the title of "raya" (Tamil: *raja*),a large tract of land and the following honors: the right to have torch lights carried before him in the day; to wear a special sword; to have a lion flag as his standard, and to have an umbrella carried over him as he walked.

While telling the legend, Mr. Sadasivam dwelt with great relish on the battle between the Tontaiman and the elephant which was, for him, the central act of the story.

The old Telugu poems *Tondaiman Palegaru Kaifiyatu* 38and the *Tondaman Vamsavali* by Court Poet Nudurupati Venkanna39 are still extant and give poetic versions of this story with considerable detail and flourish.40 Radhakrishna Aiyar in his *General History of the Pudukkottai State* fortunately summarized the old Tamil versions of the legend, the full text of which is now lost.41 These older ballads on the origin of the Tontaiman rule expand the story to include a long genealogy of the family. The capture of the Vijayanagar raja's own elephant is inevitably mentioned. These poems also give an exacting and bewildering list of over twenty pirutu42usually transcribed from the Tamil and Telugu into English as "Biruthus"which were bestowed upon the first Tontaiman Raya for his valor. The Biruthus were badges of honor that took the form of titles, of clothing, of emblems carried before the raja, or persons who formed part of the raja's entourage. The *Tondaman Vamsavali* lists the first Biruthus as: a copper image of the Gandabherunda (a mythical bird that preys on elephants), five-colored flags, umbrellas, a horse with bells, a Bheri (a high pitched trumpet carried on an elephant), a horn made from white conch shell, flags with the emblems of a lion, fish, and Garuda (an eagle), special musical instruments, incense, a vessel containing special scents, good horses, a finely decorated knife, a large drum, a palanquin painted with a lion's head emblem, the right to burn silver torches in the daytime, an elephant with a drum on its back, two white fans (*camaram*),bards, and a troop of dancing girls in addition to titles of honor. All of these assorted items were meant to be taken along when the new raja went in procession. In addition to these the poems casually mention that the new raja was also given

a tract of land.

Undaunted with this long enumeration of emblems, the ballads relate the rest of the story of the Tontaimans' rise to power as if this were a long game of Biruthus monopoly. The first Raya Tontaiman was childless, but after praying in a temple in his village, Siva appeared to him in a dream and promised two sons who would be like precious pearls. These boys soon grew up and began to collect Biruthus on their own. The raja of Tanjore heard of the fame and beauty of these two young men and invited them to come to stay at his court. One version has the raja asking them to take service as warriors but another hints that their good company alone was desired. The boys' chief exploit was to capture a tiger and a panther, for which they were awarded another set of Biruthus: a necklace with a coin bearing Rama's image, a sword called the Ramabhanda, more umbrellas, long coats with gold lace, jewelry, a herd of elephants. When the Tanjore raja tried to force them to abjure their devotion to Siva for Visnu, the brothers returned home. Sometime later the Setupati (the title of the rajas of Ramnad) needed their services to catch some bigger game than elephants and tigers. He called them to help quell a rebellion of local chieftains. By "using kind words only" the elder brother talked the rebellious Tevars back into submission. Not to be outdone, his younger brother Namana returned to the more usual acts of bravery and killed one of the Setupati's own elephants which had gone wild. Again the brothers returned home laden with more Biruthus, another tract of land, and the elder brother received the title from which he took his name, Raghunatha. As one final round of play, the two brothers took service at the court of the raja of Madurai and tamed an entire rebellion of local chieftains to the souththis time by more bloody means. The Pandyan raja granted Raghunatha the right to use all of

his own royal titles. The longest and most classical of the Telegu poems continues the narration of war deeds in a staggering list of conquests from aid rendered to the Trichinopoly royal family to victory over the kings of Kerala and wars with former allies in Tanjore. By the time Raghunatha Raya and his brother Namana completed his round of "services," the raya was himself ruler of most of the territory called Pudukkottai. It is at this point that the *Tondaman Vamsavali* says that Raya Tontaiman worshiped the goddess Brihadambal at the Tirugokarnam temple and built Pudukkottai, "a new fort," as the capital of what was now his kingdom. The tale ends as the Tontaimans entered history as the independent rulers of the new district of Pudukkottai in the year 1689.

This story of the Tontaimans was no doubt considered a truly

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epic tale. The *Tondaman Vamsavali* adopts a grand tone for recitation at the court of a great monarch and even the oral retelling was no less serious. Yet some of the most prominent figures expected in any epic are not here, and much of what is here seems almost trivial. Foremost in this cast of missing characters are the gods who pour their blessings on the struggling hero. The *Tondaman Vamsavali* traces the Tontaiman line back fourteen generations to one of Indra's earthly love affairs. The divine seed was long hybridized before the heroic deeds of Raghunatha Raya. Indra himself never appears on the scene. Siva does intervene as usual in the process of fertility but again his presence hardly pervades the story. And most surprisingly, the great goddess Brihadambal, the present tutelary deity of the Tontaiman, enters the picture only after the kingdom was won. Here other sources confirm that Raghunatha Raya indeed was the first Tontaiman to "pray to" the great goddess, but he was not the first of his line to be installed in front of the goddess's dais. Interestingly, evidence is clear that the goddess who viewed Raya Raghunatha's *pattapisekam*,his coronation, was not Brihadambal of Tirugokarnam but the Divine Lady who resided in the nearby temple of Kudumiyamalai. 43 Present opinion in Pudukkottai and older sources holds that this first coronation was done "in imitation" of the practices of the former rulers of the area and was not indigenous to the Kallar chieftains. It took centuries for the lady of Tirugokarnam to absorb the religious attention of the Tontaimans. For, the final admission that she indeed was vital to their rule came when Ramacandra Tontaiman took the title Brihadambal Das. Up to that point, the Tontaimans maintained good relationships with gods of their kingdom but the ultimate source of their power did not arise directly from such deities.

The audience for the epic tale of the Tontaiman's royal origins must have been expected to take seriously what the narration in fact makes surprisingly clear. The Tontaimans' rise to power was initiated by several bouts with two elephants, one tiger, and one panther gone wild, for which the family received an odd assortment of what may seem figuratively, and also even literally, white elephants. But such stories are common to this region. The rajas of nearby Ramnad told similar tales of their origin.44 In these tales are those same acts of creative violence that in Sanskritized Tamil myth cause great concern about the proper means of absolution from such pollution and sin. But here in the *Tondaman Vamsavali* as in other such tales, violence occurs with absolutely no apology. The Tontaimans kill or tame both animals and men and are much rewarded for their actions in the form of

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Biruthus. These very tangible honors became part of the king's public dresspart of his public *body*.

In the *Tondaman Vamsavali* the Tontaiman both made themselves, and are made, into kings as they seem to incorporate the power of each of their victims into their own body. The process resembles the process by which persons become village deities after a violent death. Stuart Blackburn suggests that the violence of murder or fateful accident or brutality releases a power that accrues to the victim whose shade becomes a spiritual body of considerable power. 45 The king here is not victim but rather is the doer, the actor who can grasp the power of his victims for his own use. Notice, however, that the would-be raja cannot directly transform his creative violence into Biruthus. The Biruthus are always "given" by a higher lord who in publicly confirming the Tontaiman's acts as heroic effects the change whereby the power residue in the act of taming men or beasts becomes a tangible part of the raja's new body. In this sense the raja both makes himself and is made a king. But neither Brahman nor ascetic nor oddly even gods effect the transmutation of his body from that of a Kallar chieftain to a royal lord. This process of body-building remains a human drama set in an unabashed warriors' world.46

The king's body in this tale of tamed elephants and footloose clansmen, however, is no less divine than the icon-king that Sadasiva Brahma brought forth. For those Biruthus which the Tontaiman collected remained in daily use in the palace. The Biruthus are both things and persons that minister to the body of the king. Some are actual clothes which he wears to glorify his body, others such as the bards and the dancing girls "feed" his body through song and dance to keep his passionate naturehis own *royal* naturealive.47 The care, dressing, and feeding of the king closely parallels the same attentions that are said to maintain the life of the divine icon of the goddess in her own holy *koyil*,temple/palace. Thus the function of the Biruthus follows the same theo-logic as the ritual process of the fruitful expiation of the raja's sins in the Sadasiva Brahma legends. The raja's body is again transformed from simple flesh to an icon bodylike the icon body of god.

C. Conclusion: The "Devotee" as God-keeper and as God

Something unorthodox lingers in these two "myths" from Pudukkottai. The traditional relationship between the outsider/sinner and the gracious deity is eclipsed by another theological formula. The moral

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lesson taught to the Chola king by the myths of kingship collected around 1800 by Colin Mackenzie, and others recently cited by David Shulman, 48 seem to center always on the issue of the king's overstepping his humanity in a bid for unlawful divine status equal to gods. The Pudukkottai rajas apparently never learned this Brahmanical lesson and ironically managed to outlast those more noble kings who did.

But the issue of the relationship between the king as icon and the king as "devotee" cannot end here with the simple theory that here is yet another example of the conflict between popular and Brahmanical traditions. The meaning of "devotee" was itself absorbed into the iconic culture of Pudukkottai and given new meaning. Ramacandra Tontaiman's bid for the position had a different meaning within Pudukkottai than it did outside of the state. The raja, as the fountainhead of the kingdom's wealth, was the ultimate provider not only for his human subjects but of the gods of the kingdom as well. It was the raja who provided the food, dress, and the entertainers for his Divine Lady. It was also the raja who could provide for the installation of new deities, and for the building of new temples to house them. This function he shared with any wealthy human, but even when others paid, the king was still seen as the ultimate source of the "honors," the tangible services and "clothing" that were provided for each divine icon. In this sense, he "served" the gods. But what a service! Their very bodies were in his care, their life as icons depended on his ability to give and his willingness to serve just as the kingdom's life equally depended on the gods' contented presence within the realm.49 The hidden tension between the Brahmanical and the popular in India rests in a complex and very ancient theological issue over who, and what, and how the divine body of God is related to the divinity in the body of humankind. The royal myths from Pudukkottai can therefore be used to argue what texts like those from the late Chola period only hint but never in their Brahmanical fear admit: that the king's body is a divine icon and that the king as a human has also become the keeper of the God's own divine body. It is this awe-full theological dilemma that has always created the discomfort in Brahmanical theology over the power of the king and the power of God. In this Brahmanical sense, the king is the sinnerthe demon who, by definition, always seeks to take the place of the gods, to eat their food during the sacrifice, and to occupy their throne. Like the demons, the king never was satisfied with the place the Brahmans assigned to him. The Pudukkottai rajas played their role as "sinners" wellalways overstepping the bounds of social and theological decency to take power when there was power waiting to be

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taken. Ironically, the Tontaimans seemed to continually provide the Brahmans and the moral-minded Victorian overlords with those necessary examples of sin that the righteous need to survive. Yet within Pudukkottai, the gods never went hungry nor did the people ever suffer the loss of a god in their own human flesh. The Victorian British are long gone. The Brahmans have lost their hegemony in administrative and even theological power in Tamilnadu. His Highness Rajagopala Tontaiman, the "former" raja of Pudukkottai, is alive, and few in Pudukkottai would not stop to catch a glimpse of him when his car drives along the well-worn road from Trichinopoly to the city which his ancestors built among the rocks and the thorns of the Tamil hinterlands.

Notes

1. This article is written in the context of a larger work, "The King's New Clothes: Toward a Recovery of Religious Things," which is in manuscript form. Many of the subjects mentioned here are treated in detail in the manuscript.

2. The title was taken in English and spelled in this form of anglicized Tamil Grantha. When written in Tamil the title appeared as *Pirukatampal*.

3. For a detailed account of this relationship between God and king see Frédérique Apffel Marglin, *Wives of the God-King*: *The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985).

4. See Samuel Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1883).

5. Madeleine Biardeau, "L'arbre *sami* et le buffle sacrificiel." *Purusartha 5* (1981), 234-238. For a detailed discussion of Biardeau's thesis as presented in her many other works, see Alf Hiltebeitel, "Toward a Coherent Study of Hinduism," *Religious Studies Review* 9(1983), 206-211.

6. Recent works on the hinterland rajas in both northern and southern India include Richard Fox, *Kin*, *Clan*, *Raja and Rule*: *State-Hinterland Relations in Preindustrial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Burton Stein, "Integration of the Agrarian System in South India" in *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History,*edited by Robert Frykenberg (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); David Shulman, "On South Indian Bandits and Kings." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 17(1980), 283-306; Nicholas Dirks, "The Pasts of a Palaiyakarar: The Ethnohistory of a South Indian Little King," *Journal of Asian Studies* 41 (1982), 655-686.

7. Examples of such epic tales are numerous. Families of hill lords who became emperors continue to include their past as outsiders in the founding

legends of their house. Readily accessible examples can be found in J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Hoysalas*: *A Medieval Indian Royal Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 1-37; B. A. Saletore, *Social and Political Life in the Vijayanagar Empire* (Madras: B. G. Paul & Co., 1934), 23-36. The early British residents to the princely states often collected these family histories as genealogies. For example, see the British resident to Nagpur, H. T. Colebrook's "Memoir of the Origin and Descent of the Present Bonslaah Family Now on the Musmud of Berar" in the "Correspondence of H. T. Colebrooke, October 13, 1838" in the Wellesley Papers/ADD 13589, European Manuscripts, The British Library).

8. Mark Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India*.1810-1817 (2nd ed. Madras: Higgenbotham & Co., 1869), 33.

9. The raja's plight is sensitively analysed by Nicholas B. Dirks, "Little Kingdoms of South India: Political Authority and Social Relations in the Southern Tamil Countryside" (Manuscript, 1983), 445ff.

10. Stuart Blackburn has recently argued against the usual classification of the Kallars as a criminal tribe. See "The Kallars: A Tamil 'Criminal Tribe' Reconsidered." *South Asia* 1(1978), 38-51.

11. This description was given in the memoirs of the Brahman Dewan appointed by the raja under pressure from the British. See A. Sashiah Sastri, "Resumé of My Sixteen Years of Administration of the Pudukkottai State," in the "Collected Letters of A. Sashiah Sastriar." Manuscripts kindly lent by Tiru A. R. Seshia Sastri of Kumbakonam.

12. See "The Biruthus of the Tondaimans," manuscript in the Palace Records housed at the Residency, Pudukkottai, p. 7.

13. The Tontaimans were the subject of many poems composed for them within Pudukkottai. Their status, both assumed and acknowledged, as rulers becomes apparent in these. A late example is R. Ulakanatu Pillai, *Iyalicaippamalai* (Plain Songs for Ordinary People, Songs in Praise of H. H. Marthanda Bairava Tondaiman) (Pudukkottai: Pudukkottai Kamala Press, 1937).

14. The early Tontaimans did write devotional music to the goddess but the extant verses address her as "merciful mother." There is a texture of intimacy here that is not always implied in the later devotee-servant relationship. These

songs were sung in concert by the former head court musician of Pudukkottai at the American Counsulate in Madras for opening of "Mahamaya: Batiks by Dick Waghorne" in 1979. Tape is available.

15. This was the later famous Christian F. Swartz. George Patterson, "The Diary of George Patterson, 1772-1773," in the European Manuscripts/E379 of the Indian Office Library, London, volumns 8-9.

16. See S. R. Lushington, "The Origin of the Polegars." Letter dated August 18, 1799 in the Wellesley Papers/ADD 13,657, European Manuscripts, The British Library. Lushington disparages the Brahmans whose presence at courts, he supposed, inflated the Polegars' false sense of independence.

17. David Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

18. Two examples still available in Pudukkottai libraries are *Cataciva Piramentira Carittiram* (The Story of Sadasiva Brahma) (Pudukkottai: Neroor Sadasiva Bramendra Sabha, 1950); and N. Thiagarajan, *A Child's History of Pudukkottai*: *The Place and Its People* (Pudukkottai: Sri Brihadambal State Press, 1932). The latter was a school text book and retold the story of Sadasiva as an important event in the state's history.

19. Dirks, "Pasts of a Palaiyakarar," 659.

20. There is a wealth of information on this genre of epic/folk literature which uses the same forms to praise both gods and kings in the U. V. Swaminatha Iyer library in Madras. See *Descriptive Catalogue of Tamil Manuscripts* in the Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library, Tiruvanmiyur, Madras. The use of common poetic forms to praise both gods and kings, of course, is nothing new to Tamilnadu and can be found in Sangam literature, as Geroge Hart has clearly shown in *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*: *Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

21. S. Radhakrishna Aiyar, *A General History of Pudukkottai* (Pudukkottai: Sri Brihadambal State Press, 1917), 176-178.

22. See J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*: *Essays in Indian Ritual*, *Kingship*, *and Society* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985); Veena Das, *Structure and Cognition*: *Aspects of Hindu Caste and Ritual* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1977); T. N. Madan, ed., *Ways of Life*: *King*, *Householder*, *Renouncer -Essays in Honour of Louis Dumont* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982).

23. People in Pudukkottai frequently relate the story of the Tontaiman's capture of the famed rebel Kattabomman and their turning him over to the British. This act is increasingly seen as a great sin since Kattabomman is now regarded as an early freedom fighter. Interestingly, it was Vijaya Raghunatha Raya's father who captured the "rebel," but that sin is now visited on the son. The nature of the Tontaiman's "sins" seem to vary according to the teller. More Brahmanical versions of his sinful acts put the story in a common myth frame and stress the raja's accidental wounding of Sadasiva and disturbance of his meditation. But everyone agrees that he indeed did "sin."

24. See Wendy O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 321ff; Shulman, *King and Clown*,75ff.

25. "Power, Purity and Pollution: Aspects of the Caste System Reconsidered," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (NS) 2(1977), 267.

26. "The Legend of Bakaulavaneswari (Brihadambal)," collected and translated from the Tamil by Rajkumari Rema Deva, personal correspondence dated September 13, 1980.

27. Veena Das, *Structure and Cognition*,18-56.

28. "The Legend of Bakaulavaneswari."

29. This becomes clear in an analysis of the relationship between the rajas and the Rajgurus. The royal priest is treated with the respect due to a raja, not a priest. He appears to stand in the raja's stead in the world of the Brahmans.

30. This is a major thesis in David Shulman's *Tamil Temple Myths*: *Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

31. *Cataciva Piramentira Carittiram*.This section was translated by Rajkumari Rema Devi.

32. Thiagarajan, *A Child's History*,23.

33. Vishakha N. Desai, ed., *Life at Court*: *Art for India's Rulers*,a catalogue of the exhibit organized by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and sponsored by the Festival of India, 1985-86. See the plate of "Raja Sidh of Mandi in the Assumed Form of Shiva," Mundi, Punjab Hills, about 1725-1730.

34. William Barton, *The Princes of India with a Chapter on Nepal* (London: Nibet and Co., 1934), 146.

35. In the spring festival of the Kapalisvara Temple in Mylapore, Madras, images of both gods and saints are carried in procession as they come to the annual wedding celebration of the Lord and Lady of the temple. See the cover photo for *Gods of Flesh/Gods of Stone* edited by Joanne Waghorne and Norman Cutler (Chambersburg: Anima Press, 1985).

36. "The Madoora Poorannum, 24th Chapter, Translated from the Tamil Language by Cheenevassiah in 1807," in Mackenzie Collections, General Section, "The Hindoo Collection-Memoirs and Pieces of the Ancient History of the South, the Chola, Chera, and Pandyas Mundalums. Collected and translated for Major Mackenzie or communicated by his friends and correspondents, 1810," European Manuscripts, India Office Library, p. 102.

37. "Ancient History of the Chola Rajahs: This Ancient Story written in the Maratta Language is now Translated into English by the Hindoo, Venket-Row a Maratta Brahmin, & Native of Tanjore in the Year 1804," in the Mackenzie Collection, p. 139.

38. Telugu Manuscripts/D2620, Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras.

39. Telugu Manuscripts/295, Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras.

40. Similar to the Telugu versions but with a genealogy is the *Tondamanpalegarubiradavuli*.Telugu Manuscripts/D2621, Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras.

41. *Raya Tondaiman Anuragamalai* and the *Tondaiman Irattaimanimalai*,mentioned on pp. 119-120. See also Sayimadha Siva Brindadevi, *Pudukkottai Simaiyum Puttuyirperrakalai Kalum* ("Pudukkottai and the Revitalized Arts") in *The Souvenir Volume of the Tamil Isai Sangam*,1978, 53.

42. For another interpretation of the Biruthus, see Nicholas Dirks, "The Structure and Meaning of Political Relations in a South Indian Little Kingdom," Humanities Working Paper 14 (Pasadena: California Institute of Technology,

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1978). The term is originally Sanskrit, here a Telugu-Sanskrit form as"Biruthu" but *pirutu* in Tamil. The word appeared in English as Biruthu well into the twentieth century.

43. From an interview with K. A. Panchapagesa Dikshitar who read verses from a palm leaf manuscript used in the last coronation ceremony held in Kudumiyamalai in 1730, the *Sikagirida Charitam* by Gotra Swamidikshitar and Siva Rama Dikshitar, Tamil Grantha on palmleaf. Manuscript in the keeping of Sri K. A. Panchapagesa Dikshitar, Pudukkottai.

44. See Pamela G. Price, "Raja-dharma in 19th century South India: land, litgation and largess in Ramnad Zamindari." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* N.S. 132(1979), 209.

45. "Death and Deification: Folk Cults in Hinduism." *History of Religions* 24(1985), 255-274.

46. For the full import of this term in South Asia see Heesterman, *Inner Conflict*,99ff.

47. See Adrian Mayer, "Perceptions of Princely Rule: Perspectives from a Biography," in T. N. Madan, *Ways of Life*.

48. In summarizing the cycle of royal myths from the Chola period, Shulman suggests that one of the major lessons meant for the king in these tales is that "the essential relationship of the king and god is now an analogical one that is always in danger of being taken too literally." *The King and the Clown*,405.

49. The interdependent relationship between gods and the human community is complex. See my "From Geertz's Ethnography to an Ethnotheology?" in *Anthropology and the Study of Religion*,Frank E. Reynolds and Robert L. Moore, eds. (Chicago: Center for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1984).

15
The Transgressive Sacrality of the Diksita: Sacrifice, Criminality and *Bhakti* in the Hindu Tradition 1

Sunthar Visuvalingam

A. Divine Purity and Demoniac Power: A Semiotic Definition of Transgressive Sacrality2

"*If for other-worldly exploits, this world*
shows no reverence, what alas! are we to say to that?
But with this fellow's boisterous laughter here,
who would not roar with laughter holding both his sides?"3

The clownish Pasupata, an inextricable fusion of ascetic renunciation and symbolic violation, immediately offers us the ideal semiotic definition of transgressive sacrality, for his divine purity exaggerates the interdictory regimen of the classical Brahman sacrificer only as a preparation for the demoniac power of the outcaste criminal Kapalika. He is the focal point of tension that holds together the perspectives, by mediating between the values, of the impure pre-classical and the pure classical diksita, the orthodox sannyasin and the heterodox monk,

Dedicated to my generous American patron and *alter ego*,the late Professor HARVEY PAUL ALPER, who could not wait to present his contribution on "Transgression, Revolution and Universalization: the Future of Hindu Civilization" to our panel on *Transgressive Sacrality and the Other*.

the Saiva bhakta and the Vedic ritualist, the Brahman Vidusaka and the tribal shaman. A proper hermeneutic of the Pasupata spiritual praxis, intent on restoring its unity as an integral discipline contributing to a single goal, can therefore provide the indispensable conceptual framework for a dialectical understanding of the complex relations between the mutually interfering categories of the pure and the impure, the sacred and the profane, orthodoxy and heterodoxy, sacrifice and bhakti, external ritual and internal yoga, Vedism and Saivism, Brahmanical law and tantric transgression.

Unlike the alert studied reserve and chaste self-control of the orthodox vegetarian Brahman with his ritual safeguards against the impurity of death, the Pasupata was obliged to worship Rudra with loud laughter, songs, dance, and meaningless sounds (*Pasupata-Sutra I*.8) and practice an unorthodox Yoga (I.1) of pretending to be asleep when awake (II.12: *krathana* "snoring"), limping as if his feet were deformed (III.14: *mantana*),performing lewd gestures in the proximity of women (III.15: *srngarana*),improper actions (e.g., blurring the distinction between the pure and the impure; 111.16) and nonsensical speech (full of repetition and contradiction; III.17), but whose sacred character and intent is so artfully disguised before the profane public (IV.1-5) as to invite abuse and even assault (III.1-7, 18, IV.14) for his apparent idiocy and madness (IV.6, 8). Yet in its classical Lakula form it was particularly meant for (loin-clothed or even naked, I.10-11) Brahmans compelled to avoid (at least in the initial stages) the sight of (impurities like) urine and excrement (I.12) and all contact with women and low castes (I.13)even accidental pollution required meticulous purification (I.14-17)and who assiduously cultivated mental purity (I.18) culminating in yogic detachment and conquest

of the senses, and the universal friendliness (maitra) that accompanies constant union with the Lord (V.1-7, 11).

Even while reinforcing his interdictory sacrality by providing the (unconscious) safety-valve for the repressed primal energies that he seeks to master, the symbolic transgressions of the Brahman(ized) ascetic form a system that finds concrete fulfillment in the ritual praxis of the impure Kapalika as the supreme Mahapasupata. 4 The "contradiction" between the "paranoid" avoidance of impurity in the first or "marked" (*vyakta*)stage and living in the cemetery infested with Candalas, dogs, vultures, Kapalikas, etc., in the fifth and last stage, where "the accomplished Yogin is not [any longer] tainted by [his] actions or sins" (PS V.20), imposes a dialectical reading of the Pasupata aphorisms, against the "apologetic" interpretation of the commentary

which is necessarily obliged to camouflage its transgressive finality in a manner suitable to the interdictory requirements of the novice at the first stage or even would-be candidates from the ranks of orthodox Brahmanism. Whereas the Brahman (formerly) worshiped the gods in an auspicious right-handed and the manes in an inauspicious left-handed manner, the ambidextrous bhakta now adored the intrinsically ambivalent Rudra in both these modes as containing both gods and manes in his demoniac divinity (PSII.7-11). Whereas the left-over offering to the terrible divinity is dangerously unfit for normal use, the abnormal Saiva adept should wear only the garland already worn by the terrible Rudra (I.5), as all that was inauspicious in normal worship became auspicious (II.7) for the symbolic transgressor. The lewd bearer of the phallic linga (I.6) should ultimately revert to animal behaviour like that of a cow or deer (V.18), best understood in the light of the transgressive sexuality of the deer-skinned diksita finding full expression in the ritual incest of sacrifices like the *Gosava*.The royal Indra who first practiced the Pasupata vow among the demoniac Asuras (IV.10) in order to defeat them through their own magic (IV.12: *maya*)is but the mythical projection of the Brahmanical sacrificer.

Although (initially) committed to non-violence and other traditional restraints (yama/niyama), the wielder of the club relished meat (buffalo, boar, etc.) and, although not to be killed by others, acquired the (magical) power to injure and kill others, in order to become chief of the (warrior-)hosts (*mahaganapati*)of the great God (I.31-2,37). It is legitimate to pose the question whether the ascetic does not owe his manifold suprahuman powers as much to his (symbolic) transgressions as to his severe austerities (I.20-37). The rule of bathing thrice daily with ashes, lying on a bed of ashes and rebathing with ashes in the case of (accidental) defilement (I.2-4), which commentaries beginning with Kaundinya prescribe as "purification" potent enough to absolve from even Brahmanicidal transgressions (ad 1.9), served in reality only to reinscribe the ghostly initiate (III.11 pretavaccaret) into the impure universe of death before he culminated (the last stage of) his yoga confined to the cremation ground where he constantly meditated upon and awaited union with Rudra (V.30-4). The impurity of death affirms itself as the cornerstone of the purified Pasupata asceticism already in the founding myth, reported in the *Vayu* (ch. 23) and *Linga* (ch. 24) Puranas, of Rudra entering a dead body thrown into the cremation ground at Kayavatara or Kayavarohana in order to incarnate himself as the brahmacarin Lakulin. In the Kapalika, the aggressive club is replaced by the murderous skull-topped khatvanga, and the (Maha-)

Pasupata's becoming "Dharma incarnate" (V.31) by residing in the cremation ground (V.30) again reveals that underworldly foundation of the socio-religious order governed by royal Death as Yama-Dharmaraja.

The (feigning of) epileptic fits (111.13) and psychopathological states, combined with the recommended exclusive meditation on the "quivering" (vipra) sound-syllable Omkara (V.24-8) and the archaic terminology of the aphorisms where the (raudra) bráhman still refers to compressed liturgical formulas (1.15,39, 11.21-7, 111.20-6, IV.21-4, V.21-2, 41-7), not only suggest the ritual systematization of the original identity of the vision of the Rgvedic seer (rsi) and the ecstatic trance of the shaman but also the cultivation of a transgressive technique of "divine madness" regulated by the interdictory controls that also define classical Brahmanism. 5 Concealment of his "purified" ritual(ized) speech (IV.3: *gudhapavitravanih*)and behaviour (IV.2: *gudhavratah*)by the erudite Mahabrahmana, who thereby seeks to transform his knowledge into consummate penance (III.19, IV.1), suggests that much of his incoherent rambling was only the comic disguise assumed by the enigmatic bráhman, whose "purest" essence was Omkara (V.27: *vagvisuddhah*).The deformed (Maha-)Ganapati, "Lord of the *Pramathas*,"who presides over the comic sentiment (*hasya*)in the Sanskrit drama, is himself born from Omkara's bi-unity (mithuna). Issuing thunderously from the sacrificial stake in the form of the cosmic

linga, Omkara's mysterious laughter, while affirming the supremacy of Rudra, is indistinguishable from the violent laughter (*attahasa*)of the Great God (*Mahadeva*)himself.6

All these essentially *comic* figures of symbolic violation like Pasupata, Ganesa and Vidusaka have for their sacred syllable the inarticulate (anirukta) Omkara because, like the *vacarme* of explosive laughter, it signifies chaotic indifferentiation in the acoustic/linguistic code. In a traditional culture sharing a depreciative, repressive attitude to profane laughter, the Pasupata's "sacred" laughter in imitation of the attahasa of his elect divinity Rudra can only further signify transgression.7 The recoding of these Pasupata notations into the nonsensical poetic humor (*kavyhasya*)of the laughing Vidusaka is only the profane spectacle of that archaic shamanic inspiration dramatically objectivizing itself through the *kavi's* aesthetic creation8 under this inscrutably familiar guise of folly that psychoanalysis must appropriate at its own risk. The contrarying Varuna-Vidusaka who "deforms" (vidus- = virup-) the well-structured propositions of the hero-Indra in the ritual preliminaries (*purvaranga*)to the Sanskrit drama is none other

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than the transgressive Vedic Gandharva who, bearing onomatopoeic names like "Haha" or "Huhu," still conserved the comic dimension of the stammering pre-classical diksita. 9 Torn apart, in the post-axial differentiation of classical Hinduism, between the anti-social Pasupata transgressions of the unorthodox Brahman renunciate and the domesticated "non-Vedic" stage-figure of the privileged Mahabrahmana Vidusaka, primitive clowning recognizes its lost organic unity in the spectacular performance of the Pueblo Koyemshi, where the highest specialists of the sacred publicly violate fundamental taboos before the half-terrified half-amused spectators of the tribe, whose entire religion would seem to be founded on the observance of these very interdictions, which the clowns indeed help maintain by their ridiculous negative example.10

Hence, transgression acquires a sacred dimension only when it is subordinated to a suprahuman aim, either explicitly or through its inscription in a symbolic context which, by paradoxically juxtaposing and especially infusing them with the values of the interdictory sacred, charges even the crudest profanities with a transcendent significance. As the social organization becomes more differentiated, the process of reinscription may well be translated into mythico-ritual "sectarian" confrontations between renunciatory ascetic orders and frankly transgressive religious currents, or between the hierarchized gods and perspectives of pure sacerdotal and impure even "marginal" castes. By reserving, as ordained by Prometheus in the Hesiodic founding-myth, the aromatized fumes of the burnt bones for the gods and the cooked animal for human consumption, on the one hand, and by inscribing, within the sacrificial procedure itself, the culinary progression from a "savage" roasting of the victim's unsalted vital organs consumed on the spot to the "civilized" boiling of its seasoned flesh fit for delayed consumption on the other hand, the Greek citizen sought to maintain his political life at a reasoned mid-distance mediating between the beastly and the divine. By inverting this culinary sequence, the central Orphic initiatic myth of the ritual murder of the child-Dionysos by the Titans, cast in the image of primordial mankind, who first boil his members before roasting them, reveals and condemns the animal-sacrifice that sustains the Greek city-state to be no more than a reversion to primitive cannibalism, shunned with horror by the pure vegetarian spirituality of the Orphics who rejected this institutionalized violence. Yet, not only did Dionysos, whose pure, purified pole was adored by the Orphics themselves as the benign incarnation of the paradisaical Golden Age, receive blood sacrifices and even raw flesh

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from the *polis*,but his transgressive essence took possession of his frenzied devotees to sanctify even their omophagy and anthropophagy. By presenting itself as that critical point where the interdictory masculine spirituality of Orphic asceticism reaches its zenith only to plunge into the abysmal depths of dionysiac transgression, the savage dismemberment of the sun-worshipping apollonian Orpheus at the impure female hands of the furious Bacchae, could just as well be read, in the light of the profound complicity between the delphic Apollo and the victimized Dionysos, as the tacit sacralization of the unmitigated crime of cannibalism that nourishes the roots of Greek humanity. 11

Brahmanicide likewise sacralizes the demoniac Bhairava, even while debasing and excommunicating him, only because the mytheme of decapitation, reinforced by the precise ritualization of its symbolic notations, allows him to participate in the interdictory sacrality of his victim Brahma. If the terrible Mahavrata of the criminal Kapalika corresponds so exactly

to the punishment prescribed by the Brahmanical law books of the sacrificial dharma, this is only because this juridical order was itself determined by the equation of the Soma-diksita to the ritual murderer of the sacrificial animal. The continuity is attested even in the sixth century A.D. in South India in the person of Kapalisarman of the Taittiriya-carana who performed Soma sacrifices, which has rightly been linked to the *Somasiddhanta* of another 11th C. Brahman Kapalika, Somi-bhattaraka.12 The Kutsa-gotra to which Kapalisarman belonged was a clan of despicable, degraded Brahmans from whose ranks the Soma seller impersonating the Vedic Gandharva could be drawn, a role otherwise often played by a Sudra who was subsequently abused and beaten. This ambivalent Soma seller is one of the models of the likewise manhandled Mahabrahmana-Vidusaka who, as Madhavya, is himself assimilated to the sacrificial animal, whose ritual identity with the Soma-diksita projected as the Brahman Kapalika is retained in the persistent belief in Nepal that the best human victims are the semi-Untouchable Kusles, descendants of the Kapalikas and often custodians of the Newar cult of Bhairava. The deradicalization, attributed to Macchanda/Matsyendranath, of the clan-structured (kula) Kapalika praxis of the cremation ground, reformed by the abandoning of sect-distinctive signs which permitted its domesticated generalization as the Kaula secret societies attracting converts from the ranks of Brahmanical orthodoxy and penetrating deeply into the royal courts and the "patrician intelligentsia," could therefore just as well be understood as a Tantric reworking, around the *Bhairavagamas*,of the pre-classical sacrificial ideology which was thereby rendered accessible

to especially householders from all levels of the caste society. For the Trika Brahman, schooled in all the classical "philosophies" and thoroughly imbued with "Aryan" culture, it is not the impurity of the Untouchable in itself, but rather its radical exploitation in the violation of interiorized norms of purity that is the source of the Kaula's sacred power. 13 Likewise the founding discourse of the Mahabrahmana-Vidusaka, in whom the pre-classical Vedic diksita has assimilated the tantric notations of the Kaula adept, continued to be enacted at the transgressive centre of the nevertheless Brahmanical stage.

The semiotics of transgressive sacrality finds its ideal symbolic operator in the multidimensional category of the pure/impure, which resists all attempts by anthropologists to reduce it to the purely sociological opposition that, in Indian civilization, rules the separation of the Brahman and the Untouchable, even while embracing their conflicting functions within the hierarchical norm(s) of the caste society. Far from being a simple first principle that would have proliferated into a bewildering variety of substances and situations so as to regulate human conduct in its entirety, the apparently "mixed" category of the impure, the point of articulation of conceptual levels that we would now distinguish as physical, physiological, psychic, juridical, moral or metaphysical, and not only social, appears rather as the complex terminal concept precipitated by an invisible semiology generating the diverse taboos of which it is the object. In other words, impurity is not the independent objective property generally presupposed by interdictory sacrality but itself on the contrary the hypostatized effect projected by the operation of a network of taboos held together by a mythico-ritual symbolic system which needs to be adequately deciphered in order to understand why certain objects, actions, and persons are impure in certain contexts.14 The quasi-Untouchability of the Mahabrahmana as funerary priest defies any functionalist or structuralist sociology that defines (the supreme status of) the Brahman in terms of his ritual purity alone, instead of deriving the inscrutable symbolism of death invested in this (in principle) Vedic Brahman in a dialectical manner from the impure sacrality of the Brahman(ized) initiate (diksita) during his embryonic regression in the pre-classical sacrifice.15 For the symbolic universe of the Vedic yajña, itself the social dramatization of an inner lived experience of transgressive sacrality, is the formal paradigm whereby the strict observance of ritually prescribed injunctions (*vidhi*)and interdictions (*nisedha*)paradoxically culminates in the sacralization of the forbidden impure so as to consecrate even the criminal Brahmanicide of the Kapalika Mahabrahmana.

It is this enigmatically structured universe of mythico-ritual correspondences and its mana-like sacred power released by their assimilation and mastery as evidenced in the riddle-like hymnology of the Rgvedic poet (kavi), that constitutes the original meaning of the term *bráhman*,which later appears in a primarily liturgical form as ritualized enigma contests (*brahmodya*)whose key was hidden in the officiating brahmán priest who silently supervised the mysterious workings of the sacrifice. 16 Makarius has sought to demonstrate that mana as power is unleashed through transgression, and resolving the enigma is symbolically equated by Lévi-Strauss with committing incest, such as is bequeathed by Prajapati

in the form of the black antelope skin to the (royal) diksita before it came to characterize the transgressive fifth head of the Puranic Brahma.17 Although apparently suffering from exaggerated timidity, constant allusions, often teasingly by his royal patron himself, are made to the formidable (magical) powers of the mock-heroic Vidusaka, who brandishes the crooked (kutilaka) weapon of Brahma in phallic gestures of displaced aggressivity ultimately aimed at the protectress of the heroine, the mythical Sarasvati, incestuous daughter of Brahma(-Prajapati). If this "caricature of the purohita," though always a Brahman and indeed protected by Omkara the quintessence of bráhman, is regularly depicted profaning the cherished values of Brahmanism and even (symbolically) violating its sacralizing interdictions, so as to earn the mocking label of "Brahman par excellence" (*Mahabrahmana*),this is no doubt because the semiotics of transgression reveals this enigmatic buffoon, who revels in abrupt irrelevant nonsensical pretentious remarks dismissed as puerile jokes, to be the delightful bearer of the primordial bráhman.18

B. The Royal Murder of the Brahman(ized) Diksita: The Inner Conflict of Man

"*Vice is the profound truth and heart of Man*."
Bataille

Archaic religion was universally centered on a deliberate, carefully delimited although often violent transgression which, in the founding mechanism of the sacrifice, even assumed the form of ritual(ized) murder. Having posed the problem as to whether the instincts that seek and find expression in these sacralized transgressions could possibly be eradicated in the course of human progress or "if it is a question on the contrary of a sovereign and irreducible part of man,

but which would hide itself from his consciousness?If in a word it is a question of his heart . . . ?" (loc. cit.), Bataille himself is inclined to the latter view that, to use Indian terminology, the organized *sát* aspect of life is founded on the original but suppressed chaos *ásat* which, as the ultimate truth of man's humanity, must be given conscious but circumscribed expression within this very order itself. 19

The pre-classical Vedic diksa charged the royal sacrificer of the world-conquering Horse Sacrifice (*Asvamedha*)with the impurity of death which he discharged during his final purificatory bath (avabhrtha) onto a deformed (Atreya) Brahman (jumbaka) representing the evil aspect of *Varuna*(-*paparupa*),after which the scapegoat emerged from the mouth-deep water bearing the sins of not only the Brahmanized diksita but of the entire community from which he was permanently expelled.20 This Brahman jumbaka, charged with the impurity of the village outcastes (*apagramah*),is the very personification of Death and Brahmanicide. By his simultaneous emergence from the pool in order to allow other evildoers to bathe away their sins, the Vedic diksita is himself assimilated to a Brahmanicide, for which reason alone even the later law books recommend a real Brahman-slayer to purify himself by performing the royal Asvamedha.21 "The purifications that the sacrificer had to undergo after the sacrifice moreover resembled the expiation of the criminal," and the sacrificial mechanisms revolving around the identification of the Soma-diksita, the victim and the divinity, ultimately offered the yajamana the means of sacrificing himself to the divinity, but through the mediation of the victim with whom he was symbolically identified.22 The sacrificer was not only anointed at the same time as the sacrificial stake (yupa) but actually took for some time the victim's place on the post which, although traversing the three cosmic levels, was measured to the dimensions of the sacrificer.

But the Brahman jumbaka immersed in the amniotic waters personified bhrunahatya, which means not only Brahmanicide but also *foeticide*.For the bhruna is ambiguously both a Srotriya initiated into the secrets of the Veda *and* an embryo before its sex can be determined, a linguistic precipitate of the sacrificial ideology that clearly reveals the embryogonic foundation of Vedic religion.23 That Brahmanism overrides the caste hierarchy, understood in the narrow sociological sense, is clear from the killing of even a Ksatriya or Vaisya who has studied the Veda or has been initiated for the Soma sacrifice being equated with Brahmanicide. The transgressive character of the embryonic regression resulting in the androgynous fusion of the male diksita and

the maternal womb (-psyche) is also suggested by the extension of the Brahmanicide punishments to one who has killed

a pregnant or menstruating wife of a twice-born performing a Soma sacrifice. 24 It is through his transgressive sacrality, symbolized by his Brahmanicide, that the diksita regresses into the embryonic realm of Varuna to regain the rejuvenating potentialities of the hidden Agni-Soma. Conversely, the embryogonic exploitation of real Brahmanicide is reinforced by the prescription of the law books that the *brahmahan* or Brahman-slayer should expiate himself by retracing the motherly Sarasvati river upstream back to its hidden source. There, at the centre of the Vedic universe, towered the world-tree Plaksa Prasravana, on reaching which the diksitas completing the Sarasvata sattras had to likewise undergo the avabhrtha bath.25

Whereas the sexualized embryonic regression is generally relived in the form of a maternal incest, the violent death undergone by the androgynized diksita in his own womb is also experienced as an infanticide and/or matricide, the whole complex of ideas being symbolically projected in highly condensed mythico-ritual scenarios to which the closest parallel are the rhetorical figures of the enigmatic dream.26 The brahmán-priest, who embodies this inner embryonic state in the outer sacrificial drama, comes to be himself identified with the mother, and the yajamana's "traumatic" rebirth as a Brahman from the womb of bráhman is assimilated to a matricidal Brahmanicide, the equation of mother and Brahman being especially codified in the cultural institution of the inviolability of the sacred cow. Virabhadra, who decapitated the sacrificer Daksa-Prajapati, not only assumes a "universal" (visvarupa) form to behead the "demoniac" king Vallalarajan in the Ankalamman cycle of myths but is himself identified with the child-Siva (Irulappan) dismembered in the (surrogate) womb of the queen by his mother, the goddess herself. Indeed, in his Andhra cult centering on the termite mound, that is still celebrated in Rajahmundry also during the diksa-like obscurity of Mahasivaratri, there is likewise a nightly funerary procession where the marchers impersonating this Bhairava-like deity are possessed rather by real children who have died an early and untimely death.27

The pastoral Gollas themselves traditionally unite their "bandit-king" Mallanna with his companion and equal, the purohita-like "Sanganna, the son of Brahmans of the Visvamitra Gotra," and even identify the two through the simultaneity of their births. Khandoba bore the transgressive sword, donated by the Brahman general of Malhargad

fort, of the purohita's son Asvatthaman, to be offered, in the form of five lambs, the voluntary sacrifice of the "five heroes" (pañcavira) made to Mailara, no different from the five children demanded by Mhaskoba. Mallanna regains his kingdom by marrying a Brahman girl Ratnangi in order to consummate his embryogonic worship of the termite mound, where this outcaste seventh son discovered Parvati's golden nose-ring which, identified with the pastoral wealth of sheep, is simultaneously the Soma in the form of boiled milk and the Agni stolen from the (Brahma-) raksasa/i of confused sex, whose skull is transformed into a bowl for gruel. The definition, in the Deccan folk cult, of true bhakti as the feeding of Martanda-Bhairava in the form of a Brahman, readily transformed like the pastoral Vaghya into a vicious dog his theriomorph, reflects the "Brahmanization" of tribal shamanism through identifying Mallanna's naked canine brother, the yupa-like single-footed (ekapada) Bhairava found in the primordial mound, with the Vedic solar (superfluous) eighth (= 7 + 1) son still-born (mrta + anda) for progeny and death from the womb of Aditi the universal Mother. 28

The Atreyas, like the Vasisthas, were highly prized for the office of purohita, whose image becomes caricaturably fused with that of the scapegoat jumbaka in the deformed Brahman Vidusaka who, through his transgressive traits, is as it were his own Brahmanicide. One of the functions of the purohita, devalued in the eyes of the orthodox Srotriya Brahmans, consisted in taking over the impurity of his essentially Untouchable royal patron, whose universalization through the diksa is expressed through the mytheme of Indra's decapitation of his demoniac purohita Visvarupa.29 Whereas Bhairava is Indra-like in his Brahmanicide, and the Vidusaka Kapiñjala derives his name from Visvarupa's decapitated Soma-drinking head, transformed into a partridge (*kapiñjala*),the names of Tantric texts like *Trisirobhairava*,apparently coined on the image of the gluttonous three-headed Visvarupa, not only indicate the identity of sacrificer and victim but also suggest that these "non-Vedic" doctrines were formulated in those esoteric circles where Brahman, king and Untouchable could come together in the not merely symbolic figure of the royal Mahabrahmana.30 Sacred, as opposed to profane, laughter should rather be interpreted as the manifestation of death-in-life; and the profane laughter that was expected to greet and echo the Vidusaka's own "exaggerated" laughter (atihasya) unconsciously participates in the paradoxical dialectic of the "sardonic" laughter, obligatorily indulged in by the victim and/or by the sacrificers on his behalf.31

C. Incestuous Marriage and Embryogonic Death in the Folk-Cult of Kattavarayan

Having now discussed the embryogonic and androgynous dimension of the diksa-ideology, we may see how it is expressed through the story of Kattavarayan. 32 Left undeveloped in the Brahmanicide Bhairava probably because of his being cast in the direct image of Kapalika ritual praxis, the trickster possibilities of the transgressor (Makarius; see n. 17) are on the contrary highlighted in the Tamil Kattavarayan who, despite the characteristic malicious pranks, still remains even etymologically a guardian-figure (kaval) like our classic ksetrapala. The whole "tragedy" of this Untouchable outcaste revolves specifically around his consuming "Brahmanicidal" passion for the pure Brahman virgin Ariyamalai, "daughter of a thousand vaidika Brahmans," which culminates rather in his fatal union with an impaling stake. The "lawful irregularities" in the narrative logic, resisting any psychologizing or sociologizing reductionism, are easily resolved by posing the following two sets of sacrificial equations partly organizing and repeatedly interfering with the normal or "romanesque" development of the plot: Ariyamalai = stake (kalu) = his mother Kamatchi [Kamaksi] = Kali = the (youngest of the) Seven Maidens; and Kattavarayan = (child-)Siva = (Brahman-)king.

His mother's constant admonishment that the stake for which he is predestined was born and grows with the forbidden Brahman girl suggests that even when he does not end up happily married to her, as in the *Natakam*,his final impalement should itself be understood as a divine marriage. It is because his mother's boon of embracing Ariyamalai is fulfilled by the fatal marriage with the stake that strangely enough the *Katai* mentions the latter's abduction only in passing and Kattavarayan, having sacrificed himself on the stake for her sake alone, is paradoxically willing to finally renounce her. Although married to her with all the gods as witnesses in the *Ammanai*,where his finally revealed Brahman birth renders him more than a welcome bridegroom in the hearts of the king and the vaidika Brahmans, he therefore still insists on consummating his passion on the stake. Kattavarayan's apparently divergent main aims, Ariyamalai in the *Katai* and apotheosis on the stake in the *Ammanai*,are in fact indissolubly merged at the symbolic level.

The incestuous desire for Kamatchi, devoted to intense asceticism since her separation from Siva's left side, has been translated into the equally transgressive union with the Brahman virgin who, though

more a pattini than his own mother, manifests an ambivalent attitude to her Untouchable lover, by both lamenting the social stigma and also reciprocating his passion. His attachment to Kamatchi is such that he feels obliged to repeatedly beg her permission and seek her blessings even after having kidnapped Ariyamalai without his mother's permission. Although the ascetic mother, cast in the mould of the sacred interdictions, opposes the union only to helplessly give in to his wishes at the end, she sets him various invariably successful tasks as "diversions" which could serve only to inflame his passion. That Kamatchi's opposition to the transgressive union of her beloved outcaste son with the, for him, "Untouchable" Brahman Ariyamalai cannot be taken seriously at face value is confirmed by the fact that she herself instigates the trickster to not only make the thousand vaidika Brahmans lose their purity in a general way, but especially by bringing a thousand Paraiya men to sleep with the Brahman wives and transporting the thousand Brahmans likewise to the beds of the Paraiya women, and then impersonating their revered guru, the Kasi-kurukkal, to implicate them in a comically transgressive homa ritual, which reminds one of the use of repugnant materials in the often incestuous Tantric *Kula-Yaga* (E. Visuvalingam, n. 114; in this volume). Far from constituting the two opposed poles of the double-bind between which the indecisive hero oscillates, the resolution of the sexual triad at the heart of the tale is realized in the symbolic identity of the bride-mother.

The symbolic identity of the fatal bride and despairing mother implies and also confirms the latter's equation with the stake, for Kamatchi has a vested interest in Kattavarayan's impalement, which is the precondition for her heavenly reunion with Siva as his left side. The symbolic mediator between the benign mother and his embryonic death at the bridal-stake is Vallatu Mankaliyamman, a form of Kali, to whom Kamatchi sends him in recognition of her superior power, and who attacks, swallows, and brings him forth again as a fondling in her arms. It is she who instructs him how to fashion a properly decorated stake from the fatal tree which she had been tending with such maternal care and she who finally grants him permission to abduct the forbidden Ariyamalai even while warning him of its fruition on the stake. Kattavarayan threatens to decapitate himself with Kali's magic sword or to throw himself on a sword unless Kamatchi grants him the boon of abducting Ariyamalai. The mutual aggressivity of mother and son is already seen in their very first earthly encounter when the "hungry" child-hero displaces his deadly blow to the wretched bird perched on the banyan tree under which Kamatchi was performing

her penance; the mother-goddess reduces her new-found son to ashes with her third eye before resuscitating him as an infant in her arms. 33

The embryogonic dimension, evident in Kali, is expressed more specifically through Kattavarayan's foster-mothers, the Seven Maidens who, like Kamatchi herself, have been performing extreme austerities for twelve years before he obliges them to recognize him as the long-awaited one (Murukan and/or Siva) from Kailasa. Their maternal equivalence with Ariyamalai is hinted at through even such trivial sequences as Kattavarayan disguising himself, like Siva, as an old man selling bangles successively to Kamatchi, the Seven Maidens, and, finally, to his beloved, before he succeeds in fastening the marriage-cord (tali) around the neck of the sleeping Brahman virgin. In the *Katai*,it is they who take the infant from the decrepit Kamatchi's arms to teach him various magical powers, especially that of changing his form at will, before returning him at the age of five to his "true" mother. Reborn on earth in different castes and localities in the *Ammanai* as a result of Siva's curse for intruding into Parvati's flower garden, the youngest, who is also the first to recognize him, and actually falls in love with and even embraces him, completes the list of terrestrial incarnations to be married, along with Karuppalaki and Ukantalaki, to Kattavarayan. She serves as the symbolic mediator between his ascetic mother and the virgin Ariyamalai, with whom she is explicitly identified and whose real divine identity is known to Kattavarayan from the very beginning. Whereas his entire tragic destiny is originally attributed to his stealing her clothes while she bathed with her six virgin companions in his mother's flower garden (Punkavanam is a name of the goddess herself) turned penance-grove, which he was created to guard, here it is Kamatchi herself who instigates him to destroy their tapas on earth. Fleeing them in the embryonic disguises of a tortoise, ant, ear-ring, and mouse after having seduced especially the youngest maiden, he promises to guard their clothes while they bathe in the ocean of milk but, repeating his "original sin," steals their saris, and is finally saved from their wrath only by his "true" mother who transforms him again into a baby and petrifies them into the seven stones still worshipped as village-goddesses.

All these embryogonic notations colored with maternal aggressivity converge at Kattavarayan's incestuous union with the virgin impaling stake and are most poignantly summed up by the *Ecal's* declaration that "he dies like a child in a crib." The "criminal" character of the (transposed) diksita is suggested by the corresponding punishment for real criminals by hanging them in a basket or box for several days

on top of a long pole. The kalu is a symbol for rebirth, for the victim still swirls around it holding a child to guarantee it healthy longevity; and the regenerative power of the diksa is exploited by bringing sick people on a bier (like dead bodies) to be revived by the goddess. The substitution of his human sacrifice by an immortal lime impaled on a spike (sula) beside the kalumaram, surrounded by men dressed as Kali, is rendered possible by its representing the seed(-state) to which Kattavarayan had already reverted at his first birth when he was unwittingly swallowed by a Brahman-girl as a sacred lime, still distributed by the priests to women seeking pregnancy. The embryogonic dimension of the final impalement is already prefigured, through the accumulation of womb-symbols, in the Ammanai-episode where, "at Kamatchi's place" which is "beyond many forests, in the middle of a flower garden, Kattavarayan does tapas by standing on a copper needle which is on top of a copper pot, which in turn is on top of a 60 foot pole (kampam)." The transgressive reversal implied in the pot on the skambha is explicated by the demonic Brahman who tests the would-be victim by claiming to have done the same tapas "standing on his head," and it is in this very context that he threatens to decapitate himself with Kali's magic sword. Elsewhere standing on the Vaisnava head of Vairicetti, the Untouchable Kattavarayan, like the Cetti ruthlessly sacrificed to become the "Master of the impalement stake," suffers to attain immortality at Kamatchi's feet through the ritual dramatization of the fatally incestuous embryonic regression, which is the precondition to the diksita's ascent up the susumna, itself projected as the kalu, axis-mundi of the Tamil folk cult.

Hence the Vedic image of the inverted tree at the Mariyamman festival, 34 where the pucari crushes the ram's head in the hole with the base of the spinal kampam, whereas the pot-womb is placed on the triple fork at its head, corresponding to the fusion of the three motherly nadis represented by the central amba and the lateral dimunitive ambika and ambalika during the fatal union of the royal Asvamedha horse with the queen-mother (mahisi). The incestuous dimension of this initiatic death is revealed in the invocation of all the "mothers" (ammai) during the parallel marriage, reflecting that

between the post and the pot, of a male buffalo with Virakali in the form of a "dead" mare, a union mediated by a Brahman adept himself incarnating the goddess to "feed" the sacrificial buffalo. The real victim is, however, the priest entering into trance while being drenched along with the uprooted kampam in the amniotic waters poured by devotees, who having earlier carried fire-pots instead on their heads, thereby indirectly

participate in this rejuvenating Agni-Soma embryogony. Whereas the "matricide" is translated into his killing Campankitaci and especially the impure washerwoman bride-to-be Vannaravalli, the sexual dimension of the fatal union, already hinted at by Kattavarayan's being fed by most of the Seven Maidens, is especially expressed in the *Ammanai* by Nallatankal climbing the stake to quench the dying hero's thirst with buttermilk. At the bottom of the stake, having secret devices installed by seven carpenters on Kattavarayan's instructions, Ariyamalai dies with the rest of the "virgins" to be taken by the Brahman Untouchable to the feet of his mother who divinizes him.

The impure evil aspect of the Brahman(ized) pre-classical diksita, intolerable from the point of view of the purified classical sacrifice, is retained in Kattavarayan's split identity determined by his double birth, first as a Brahman and then adopted by a Paraiya outcaste woman. The underlying diksa embryogony reveals itself especially in the otherwise unnecessary second sequence where the Brahman mother is replaced at the shrine of the impure Kali by the womb-belly of the deer, whose skin charged with Vedic incest symbolism is worn by the embryonic diksita. Ganesa, at the Ottapillaiyar shrine where the first birth sequence unfolds, is himself a Mahabrahmana born of his mother's impurities, and the initiatic Death confers the host of demoniac servants of Yama himself. Substituted by Tottiyattu-Cinnan when bound by the king within the Pillaiyar shrine, the black powers of this transgressive snake-charmer find superlative expression in his Keralite *alter ego*,whom he decapitates in the *Ammanai*.Kattavarayan's gift of knowing his former births is only a transposition of the *jatavidya* of the Vedic diksita, whose state of undifferentiated "universalization" (*visvarupata*)is likewise translated into the Untouchable magician's protean capacity to change his form at will. Already embodying in himself the extrememost poles of the caste hierarchy, the pañcavarnar encompasses the entire social order by assuming a whole range of social roles and by uniting, like the king, with the multiple caste earthly representatives of the Seven Maidens. The initial image of Kattavarayan as a fish trapped in Ariyamalai's hair, which suggests the subsequent unfolding of the plot, reveals its true significance when we compare her remarkable coiffure (kuntal) with the fishing net of the Cempatavar fishermen identified with the infanticide Ankalamman. 35 Not only is Kattavarayan the earthly son of the head fisherman, but Kamatchi actually tries to dissuade him from marrying the stake by pleading: "Why should you writhe and die on the fisherman's hook?" Apart from its aesthetic and romanesque charm, this image

again identifies Kattavarayan from the beginning as the fishy diksita enmeshed in the hair-net womb of the virgin mother-goddess.

Siva's wholly unjustifiable curse on his son to "die as a Brahman Untouchable fisherman on the stake," for only doing his duty in guarding his mother (and her flower-garden) is explicable as yet another "lawful irregularity" generated by the symbolic identity of father and son, within the underlying diksa ideology implicit in Parvati's locking up an ant in the womb-like obscurity of the (usually golden) casket for which her divine consort exiles her to the terrestrial garden and creates Kattavarayan in the first place. If Siva condemns his "Untouchable" son to death for erotically prolonging the nudity of the seventh Maiden as punishment for having violated his mother's sanctity, and if Parvati herself is condemned to separation as an earthly demoness merely on account of maternal compassion for her innocent child, this would be because it is his own mother(-substitute) that the son has thereby symbolically violated. And if Kattavarayan's self-sacrifice at the stake is the necessary precondition for the celestial reunion of his divine parents, would this not be simply because it is only through his initiatic death in the womb of the wife-mother that the husband-son is able to reunite with her to form the primordial androgyne? By placing the onus of the interdictory sacred on the victimized wife-mother and on the "Brahmanical" Siva, the pure husband-pole of the split-yajamana, and investing the transgressive sacred in the impure son-pole, the story of the diksita-trickster is rendered all the more palatable, even if not wholly digestible, to the exoteric consumer, including the perplexed Indologist for whom the myth seems unable to make up its mind on more points than one.

Already at the centre of events in the *Ecal*,the king is very favorably disposed towards the Untouchable in the *Ammanai*,even appointing him chief watchman over his kingdom. Apart from directly disguising himself as the king, the reversal of roles in the *Katai*,when the criminal tricks the latter into being locked in the same iron box in which the king had shackled and imprisoned him, also suggests the symbolic identity of the two antagonists. Just before his impalement, Kattavarayan "the guardian-king," assuming the form of Murukan, in fact reveals himself to Ariyappurajan as "the king who took Ariyamalai" and is publicly accorded royal worship at the foot of and along with the stake. Even the heavy chains in which (the impersonator of) Kattavarayan used to be bound in the cult remind one of the images of the royal Indra bound and put in a cage at the base of the Kathmandu Indradhvaja, and both are probably derived from the Vedic paradigm of

the (royal) diksita being bound in Varuna's noose before he substitutes for himsef with the victim on the sacrificial yupa. The "heroic feat" (pavada) performed during Dasara by the Kuruba Vaggayyas and Madigas, who pierce their legs to pass a long rope through the wound, is itself reminiscent of the royal cowherd Aryaka chained by his foot to the sacrificial post in the Sanskrit drama *Mrcchakatika*,"The Little Clay Cart." As Shulman rightly observes (in this volume), "the king's role as sacrificial patron, yajamana, is relevant to this portrait, though here the patron is also quite literally the victim of the rite," and "kingship here appears tied to a self-sacrificial ritual act."

Like that of the king Arjuna-Karttavirya, the arrogance in the *Katai* of the literally out-caste Kattavarayan, who embraces the entire caste hierarchy to reveal his royal identity at the fatal stake and receive the first puja in the sanctum of the Trimurti, expresses the same universalization of the diksa. Inherited from the Brahmanicide Indra his Vedic father, the scandalous boasting of the royal Arjuna, after abusively "murdering" the Brahmanized Yudhisthira, is equated to an expiatory ritual "suicide," because the universalization of egoism (*purnahambhava* or *purnahamta*)is paradoxically also the death of the sclerosed constricted ego. The overweening ahamkara of the demon-devotee, mercifully slain by the god of bhakti, is ultimately no more than the negative image of the divine omniscience and omnipotence of the God himself. 36

The striking coincidence in the names of the king and the Brahman Ariyamalai, coupled with our knowledge that it is he who initiates the ritual mechanisms for her birth to his temple priest, subsequently bestows wealth on her, and inexplicably appoints Civapputaiyan, Kattavarayan's father, to guard her within 21 fortresses, confirms this Brahmanical aspect of the king. It also reflects the purification of the classical yajamana into a (temporary) Brahman, and is matched by the hidden (impure) Brahmanhood of Siva's son himself, whose birth initiates the whole sacrificial sequence. For the sake of the Untouchable royal goddess his mother, the criminal son's humiliating transgressions are thus especially directed against the Untouchable watchman father, representing the Brahmanical authority of the king, the temple priest and Siva. Yet this Tamil Oedipus Rex, who vows from the beginning to "ruin the Brahman's family" by seducing doe-eyed women, for he is himself the "whore-monger" Murugan, nevertheless assumes his favorite disguise of a decrepit old man, who cannot stand the smell of females, to reveal his interdictory dimension as his

own ascetic father Siva. In the single nuclear family, reduplicated *ad infinitum* throughout this folkloric empire of the Hindu socio-religious hierarchy, the divine father dies in the form of the Untouchable son to celebrate his royal marriage with the mysterious Annamuttu, the beloved dreamlike image of the Brahman Ariyamalai-Annattulaciyammal, the virgin-mother.

Already evidenced in the ritually more "authentic" *Ammanai* and the *Ecal*,the comically exagerated humiliation of the orthodox (not only) Brahmans in the *Katai*,which accentuates Kattavarayan's trickster aspect and lends itself readily even to modern exploitation for political purposes, does not suffice to define him as a champion of lower caste resentment against Brahmanical hegemony. For not only does the hero accept his guilt and eagerly embrace his punishment, which is imitated by his unresentful devotees, but the proposed "mission" is ultimately compromised by the revelation of his Brahman birth even in the *Katai*,devoted chiefly to the entertaining diffusion of the sacrificial paradigm to the lowest levels of the caste hierarchy. His tricking of the 1000 Brahmans and their wives, beginning with Ariyamalai's father, into getting stuck to the tail of a donkey, symbol of the Untouchable, could just as well betray their, like his own, Vedic

status as Mahabrahmanas. Chorused by a lachrymose pulampal, it is clearly his death at the sacrificial stake, in other words his incestuous union with the virgin-mother, that is ultimately responsible for the Untouchable Brahman diksita's divinization in a tragic scenario that forces even the Brahmanical Siva to beg at his feet. Similarly, the annual marriage of Kala-Bhairava with the Lat or Mahasmasana-Stambha in Kasi, which marks the beginning of the period of death rituals, has been shown, through a systematic comparison with the simultaneous emergence of the mother-goddess in the form of the Kumari during the Indra-Jatra, and the decapitation of Kasi-Bhairava at the Bisket pole-festival in Nepal, to be a criminal execution with embryonic implications. 37 Just as Bhairava's punishment for Brahmanicide in fact corresponds to the "supreme penance" (Mahavrata) exalted by the Kapalikas, so too does this criminal pañcavarnar personify the transgressive sacrality of the Untouchable Vedic diksita who, by dying at the yupa, regresses into the virgin-womb of his wife-mother for a renewed lease of life on earth. It is for this reason, no doubt, that this Tamil folktale still prefers to situate Kamatchi's flower garden, where Kattavarayan first appeared, on the banks of the Ganga near Kasi, embryogonic centre of the Hindu universe.

D. Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees: Sacrifice, Bhakti and Terror

Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo 38

Otherwise inadmissible in a religion based exclusively on the love of God, the valorized mythical figures of the criminal god, the projection of the murderous sacrificer as identified with his transcendent divinity, and of the demon devotee, the extrapolation of the same transgressive diksita as incarnated in the evil victim, are still indissolubly bound together in the "Christian" figure of the (son of) God who sacrifices himself for our sins.39 The transformation of the demon-devotee Bhairavanatha, through his fatal violation of the virgin womb of the mother-goddess, into the criminal-god Bhairava, a transgressive itinerary that nevertheless provides the exemplary model for the popular pilgrimage instituted by the devout Sridhara at Vaisnodevi, reveals the essential identity of murderer and victim even within the context of a purified bhakti.40 Likewise, the "confusion" of Mani and Malla and the conflation of their respective dying boons in the composite figure of Manimal, with Mani sometimes reduced to the horse of Malla, would have been possible only if the two were perceived as constituting a single demoniac essence. Khandoba's acceptance of Mani's white horse as his own vehicle and his accordance of public worship to the reformed demon within his temple precincts, coupled with his assumption, as "destroyer of Malla" or Malhari/Mallari, of the name of the unreformed demon, suggests a similar identification of the god and his demoniac victim. If Khandoba provides goats as naivedya to satisfy the still unreformed Malla's desire for human sacrifices and accepts that the demon's decapitated human head be placed under the threshold of the temple to be trodden by his devotees and himself, this could then be interpreted as a symbolic subterfuge divulging that it is Khandoba himself who ultimately demands human sacrifice of his devotees as exemplified by the now goat-headed Malla.41 The Untouchable Matanga, sacrificed for the foundation of Khandoba's temple-fortress at his capital Jejuri and divinized into its guardian officer Yesvant Rao, is himself the Siva he thereby establishes there and is able to cure bone fractures, like the medicine man Rudra, only through the regenerative power of his fatal diksa. Likewise, it is he himself whom the "demoniac" (Betala) Cevvi Reddi had to murder in the form of the Untouchable Reca in order to gain a treasure (and, finally, a kingdom), for he changed the gotra name into Recerla in

commemoration of his faithful servant's voluntary sacrifice. The indirect identification of even the purified vegetarian god with the carnivorous demon devotee completes the triangular dialectics of *self-sacrifice* whereby the purified devotee continues to offer himself in the form of the evil egoistic victim to himself as the transcendent god of bhakti, so that he may secure abundance in his worldly life. The confluence of sacrificial paradigms and shamanizing practices in folk religion is most vividly underlined in their repeated encounter in the cult of the pastoral Khandoba assimilated to the Brahmanical Martanda-Bhairava: though himself denied direct vision of the god he worships so regularly in the temple, it is the Brahman who confirms the bhakti of the tribal by revealing that the mysterious and overpowering divine presence the latter had experienced in the solitude of the forest is indeed the god Khandoba. 42

Between the extreme poles of the popular "shamanizing" level of Tamil folk religion, where the deity, who possesses his devotees, is injured or killed in a bloody sacrificial scenario, and the Brahmanical purity of the royal temple, where the

transcendent undying god, worshiped according to the strict rules of the Agamas, is ritually extricated from all violence, we are faced with the fanatical anpu of 24 Nayanars who kill or injure themselves and/or their kin, as extensions of themselves, for the *love* of the manifestations of Siva in his slaves or linga.43 Although in the bhakti context based on a dualistic metaphysics, the Nayanar's suicide appears to be vindicated in terms of his recognition of the Lord (only) in the Other and not in his own debased self, it is nevertheless through this very self-sacrifice that he attains union (sayujyam) with Siva, who has in reality already taken possession of him through anpu. Moreover, the hagiographies themselves seem to provide symbolic equations that continue to identify the eager victim and his demanding god. His human bondage (*pasutva*)replaced by divine autonomy (*sivatva*)through the diksa of Siva's gracious look, the hunter Tinnanar feels immediately impelled to defiling worship of the linga, and his self-sacrifice is equated with the deity's own self-mutilation. This Kannappa is after all an incarnation of Arjuna, mortally crushed in the *Mahabharata* by the tribal Kirata-Siva, with whom he is identified in the context of a symbolic diksa.44 Whereas Enatinata allows himself to be killed by his treacherous rival wearing Siva's sacred ash on his forehead, Pukalccola Nayanar, by bearing the decapitated head of a Saiva devotee in the golden pot on his own head during his self-immolation in the sacrificial fire, is, as it were, identifying himself with his own victim. Pukalccola had, after all, already offered himself

as victim to his own sword at the hands of Eripatta Nayanar, dressed in the garb of Siva, only to be faced with the disconcerting prospect of his executioner using it to cut his own throat instead. The Nayanar's devout horror at killing Siva in the form of his slaves has become the bhakti pretext for his own divinization through selfless suicide, the ritual model for which is ironically provided by the original self-sacrifice of the god himself.

Other scenarios seem to extrapolate tantricizing transgressive values onto a public setting where the underlying ritual patterns are now justifiable only in terms of a shocking but exemplary anpu. Thus Ciruttontar's sacrifice to the Bhairava-ascetic of his own cooked son, left untasted by the bhakti religion, has still all the flavour of Kapalika cannibalism. Vicara Sarma's reward for his Bhairava-like Brahmanicide of his own father is to receive, as Candesvara, the dangerous nirmalya from the temple offerings to Siva, whose problematic status is explicitly compared to the ambivalence of the transgressive Somadiksita. 45 By slaughtering his next-of-kin to defend the privilege of the lecherous ash-smeared Brahman to cohabit with his own wife, Iyarpakai Nayanar's "immoral" anpu only preserves the obscure ritual traditions amply depicted on Saiva temple walls elsewhere. The fundamental, and no doubt revealing, question that must be posed to the hagiography of Tamil bhakti, even independently of these selected episodes, is why the Nayanar is able to recognize his Lord's omnipresence *only* in (those who bear) his overt ritual insignia. And more important for our problematic than the retention of the violent elements, common to both archaic Tamil culture and the Vedic blood sacrifice, is that such impetuously transgressive outbursts of divine possession are understood not in opposition to the restrained socialized bhakti of the temples but rather, as emphasized by Arumuka Navalar, as the ripening, into an irresistible overflow of anpu, of prior scrupulous performance of Agamic ritual service (carya/kriya). The same god who insists that his bhakta purify himself before entering his sacred presence within the temple also chides his exemplary devotee for being unable to immediately recognize Him when He assumes the profane impurity of the Untouchable.

Although Hindu bhakti does encompass and even re-interprets the sacrificial values of the still central Brahmanism which would have receded into the background, the crucial question is whether this transformation spells the subversion, surpassment or at least suspension of the archaic Vedic ideology, or rather achieves the generalization and triumph, at least on the symbolic level, of its constituting

dialectics of transgressive sacrality. 46 If bhakti is no more than love of God (Isvara) clarified by true knowledge (jñana) of his relationship with the soul (anu) and aesthetically reinforced by the variegated props of ritual activity (kriya), why should it nevertheless stubbornly maintain the tension and even opposition between its pure and impure poles instead of eliminating them altogether? Why are, on the one hand, concerns with ritual purity so central to the nuclear temples of Brahmanical pilgrimage, as exemplified by Kasi-Visvanatha, that Untouchables are barred from participating fully in a supposedly universalistic devotional religion? On the other hand, why are supposedly reformed (kaval) "demon devotees" like Kattavarayan, who as Murukan is the all-in-all of Tamil bhakti, not allowed to surrender once and for all to the high caste pure divinity but instead obliged to regularly reassert their ritual identity as "criminal gods" in order to re-enact the

archaic sacrificial scenario even without the manifest patronage of the Brahmans? And, in between, why should even the purified Saiva Siddhanta venerate such transgresive Rudraic examples of bhakti which its apologists have to uneasily rationalize in terms of a paradoxically fanatical anpu?

These questions must necessarily be resolved in the light of our understanding of the strategies and mechanisms through which Brahmanism succeeded in imposing itself on not only Tamil but Indian culture as a whole. The decisive consideration which derives from our analysis of the folk cults above is that bhakti, far from pitting the impure "indigenous" pole of Tamil religion against its pure "Brahmanized" pole, continues on the contrary to hold them firmly together within the single all-embracing symbolic universe of the pre-classical sacrifice. The bloody obstetrics that the impure Cempatavar have so scrupulously preserved in the cremation ground restores the vital primitive base to the Vedic diksa-ideology whose profound social significance is revealed in the annual coronation by the Brahmans of the royal divinity in the garbhagrha of the Annamalaiyar temple.47 And eager to give away the whole kingdom with his throne, the "mad" Kerala king Ceraman Perumal, who understood the sacrificial language (*kalarirr*' *arivar**)of all creation so well that he falls from his elephant prostrate at the lowly feet of the protesting ash-white washerman, is but the inseparable *alter ego* (*kalantav unarval*)of the Adisaiva poet-saint Cuntarar, the princely Brahman on his celestial white elephant eager to reunite with Siva like an errant calf with its mother.48

The real conflict is therefore not between an ill-understood Brahmanical sacrifice mysteriously imposed from above on a royal

bhakti surging spontaneously from some conveniently undefined "folk" religion, 49 but rather between a desacralized profane world, opaque to all symbolic meaning, and its uncompromising rejection in favor of an other-worldly salvation as propounded especially by the heterodox renunciation of the Jainas and Buddhists. Whereas the Jaina epic, *Jivaka Cintamani*,offered Kulottunga II a life of transient heroic and erotic adventures to be finally abandoned in quest of Nirvana, Cekkilar converted his southern patron to the Saiva mode of sanctifying his royal duties in lifeand in deaththrough imitating the exemplary devotion of the Nayanars. The *Mrcchakatika*'*s* exaggeration of the renunciatory dimension of the Brahmanized yajamana in the ambivalent figure of the chaste self-controlled Sakya mendicant,50 accurately delineates the inner tensions of Buddhism in its Indian milieu. If the symbolic exchanges condensed in the iconic Biruthus could so easily legitimize the rise of a thieving Kallar caste into a Tontaiman dynasty of worshipers of the "Great Mother" Brhadambal, this is no doubt because the central narrative of the "taming of the wild elephant," where the cloak of death is also the embryonic sheath of rebirth, was sufficient, like the vajra-wielding Indra's Vrtrahatya, to sacralize the sum total of their profane sins into a transgressive royal obstetrics.51

By asserting its own uniqueness as a mode of spiritual experience in the post-axial crisis of an Indianizing Aryan tradition faced with the challenge of indigenous tribal and Dravidian culture from without and renunciatory ideals from within, Hindu bhakti seems to have not only served as the vehicle of sacrificial values but also to have generalized them quite independently of the material reality of the Vedic sacrifice whose complicated technicalities were monopolized by the Brahmans. More than being merely a diluted substitute of the Srauta sacrifice for non-Brahmans in an increasingly commercialized society menaced by secularization, the emotionalism of bhakti in its own paradoxical way revivifies the purified abstract symbolism of the classical ritual by restoring that archaic transgressive dimension of the sacred, divulged only in cryptic suppressed fashion in its Agamic nuclear temples, but preserved so faithfully in tantricized folk religion especially by the otherwise excluded lowest castes. But the paradox of bhakti, whose sociological function is definable as the unceasing yet never wholly successful effort to sacralize life-in-the-world by infusing it with the transcendence of the absolute, is that it tolerates the violation of sacralizing interdictions, if at all, only through the "remissive" attitude52 of a cruelly merciful (karuna/krpa) God, who thereby effec-

tively disguises the disquietening *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of his own sinister essence. 53 The shocking excesses of a still exemplary bhakti (re-)assume their full transgressive significance only when perceived through the intersecting theistic worlds of a binding public ritualism modelled on the purified Mimamsa and of an underground flagrantly Tantricizing antinomianism held together, especially in the nuclear temple of pilgrimage, by the shared

sacralizing symbolic universe of Hindu mythology.54 The classical reform which (all but) eliminated the impure violent dimension from the agonistic Vedic sacrifice and exaggerated the pure pole to the point of transforming even the transgressive diksa into a preliminary purification of the individualized yajamana into a temporary Brahman,55 has been compensated for by the reworking of the original transgressive ideology and much of the accompanying symbolism into the tantric systems developing through the influx of vast amounts of pre-Vedic, Dravidian56 and even aboriginal elements. This consistent strategy, whereby the Brahmanical tradition succeeded in assimilating (not only) the Indian universe without surrendering the continuity of Hindu identity with its roots in the Vedic revelation, has been possible only because the primordial sacrifice (adiyaga) is itself largely the formal codification and ritual dramatization of an inner lived "shamanizing" experience of transgressive sacrality so central to the religious life of so-called "primitive" societies, and systematically conserved in the preclassical diksita.57 Transgression is able to dialectically surpass its (profane) opposition to (desacralized) interdiction and present itself as the fulfillment of the latter, only when both poles reveal their complementary nature within a common symbol of transcendence that defines the sacred.58

Regeneratively turned upon itself through the symbolic, where not explicit, identification of devotee, divinity, and victim within the hierarchic and regional tensions of a classical Hinduism transfigured by the pacific ideals (ahimsa) of Indian renunciation, the primordial violence of man has been, in the cohesive homogeneity of an expansionist Islam submissive to a wholly transcendent divine will, rather directed outwards through the disciplined warrior-band whose proselytizing zeal is revealed in an unmatchable readiness to kill and be killed.59 The martyred (sahid) Muslim warrior (ghazi) has thereby admirably lent himself to assimilation into the Hindu folk cult of the deified dead beside not only the heroic Bir (Pir) Babas, but also the samadhis of ascetics, the privileged Brahms and the widowed Satis, so much so that even the invading Muslim slaughterer Ghazi Miya's Bahraich tomb, replicated in other North Indian centers, is worshiped

by both Muslim and Hindu pilgrims, especially the Doms of Banaras 60 specializing in the "human sacrifice" of the death ritual. "Imprinted with blood-red sandal paste all over the victimized body of the ascetic Brahman hero, the extended hand" (*Mrcchakatika, X.5*),so characteristic of the Sati, carried in Muharram processions or topping (with five finger-pegs) the primordial earthen mounds of household shrines from the Punjab to Bengal, easily represented the Shiite quintet of Muhammad, Fatimah, Ali, Hasan, and Husain and/or the Vedic "five tribes" (pañcajanah = the Pandavas married to Pañcali) to the Indo-Islamic Panchpiriyas. Worshiped by not only Lingayats and Jains, but also Muslims, the "tribal" Khandoba, called Mallu or Ajmat Khan (or Rautray), has a Muslim wife and kotval and appears as a Pathan on horseback. After corrupting their traditions, Mallana alias Malkhan even converts the Muslim "Siva bhaktas" of Mecca, by replenishing a dried well with water and producing golden turmeric powder beside it at the end of twelve years through the matricidal slaughter of a black cow, and finally escapes by jumping with the "gold" needed for his marriage into mother Ganga, whose outstreched hand is cut off by his Muslim pursuers (for the Pirla Panduga festival?). The symbolic projection of the transgressive diksa embryogony onto the hostile presence of the carnivorous Muslim neighbour, thereby assimilated to a Hindu king or even North Indian Brahman, is also recognizable, within the popular bhakti context, in Muttal Ravuttan's abortive sacrifice of his own pregnant sister to the vegetarian Tamil Draupadi whom she so resembled, at the suggestion of the dark Kali-like goddess herself, in order to be relegated to the place corresponding to the "pacified" butcher samitr in the Vedic sacrifice.61

The splitting of the ever imminent Jewish messiah into a martyred ben-Joseph and a triumphant ben-David itself reflects the identity of executioner and victim in the archaic sacrifice to be reinstituted in the temple of Jerusalem at the end of the exile. After being dipped in the blood of the sacrificial bird, which was then used in the purification of the leper (*Leviticus* 14:7), the other bird was set free as if still bearing the guilt of the murder. Their roles differentiated by lot only on Kippur, i.e. on the actual day of collective expiation (*Leviticus* 16), the two goats, one killed "for the Lord" and the other banished into the desert as "scapegoat" for the demon Azazel ('*ez* + *azal* = "goat who escaped"), likewise suggest the sacrificial identity of victim and murderer. For both goats were consecrated with a replica of the golden crown worn by the high priest. The "crimson tongue" of thread binding together the cedar-wood and the hyssop (*Mishnah*,Parah 3:11), the highest and

lowest limits of the vegetable kingdom, which was dipped into the blood of the sacrificed bird (14:6), was also tied

between the horns of both the slaughtered goat and the scapegoat (*Mishnah*),whose death by being thrown over a cliff had the purificatory effect of immediately whitening a similar red thread hung in the porch of the temple (late apocryphal tradition). A brush of hyssop was used for daubing the lintels of the doors of the Israelites with blood from the sacrificed lamb during the tenth plague in Egypt (*Exodus* 12:22); and the same implement was also cast by the officiating priest into the midst of the burning red cow, whose ashes served to purify (*Numbers* 19:6) and with whom the Sabbataians later identified the secret of the messiah himself. 62 Esoteric commentaries not only attribute to the banished Cain the authentic sacrifice, denied to his innocent brother, with whom he is sometimes identified, but even elevate this archetype of the "sacred executioner" to the rank of the archangel Metatron. And the only significant reference to (sacred) laughter in the Bible is in the meaning (*yishaq* "he will laugh") of Isaac, to be sacrificed to the merciful God of Abraham, a privilege that is claimed instead for the likewise "laughing" (Gen. XXI:9 *mesahheq*)Ismaël by the Islamic version of the founding myth, to be historically realized in the Shiite figure of the martyred Ali.63

In the shrunken incarceral world of *homo oeconomicus*,64 increasingly menaced by the "reactionary" puritanism of divine fundamentalist fury on the one hand and the "revolutionary" permissiveness of demoniac anarchist egalitarianism on the other, and where the universal God of bhakti is posthumously impeached for violations of the rights of man even while human justice stands exposed as the naked instrument of legalized violence, what immortal amnesty can India's "criminal gods" offer to the fast-multiplying race of disinherited terrorists, these intransigent "demon devotees" who are the modern exemplars of the primordial sacrifice in their readiness to gamble away their own lives, and those of others, for a sacred cause that is not even their own? Can we still hear the wrathful prophetic judgment of the omniscient wholly Other65 imperiously trying to make itself heard through the verbose humanist rhetoric of the bourgeois ventriloquist Narcissus, heroically monologuing with the dumb royal Clown in his gilded Oriental mirror,66 to be richly rewarded for the hilarious mercenary labor by a multinational Mammonic tribe of enterprising moneylenders just grasping at homeless Abel's Fool-sceptre?67 "Jewish history is familiar to us for its dualities: *two* groups of people who came together to form the nation, *two* kingdoms into which this nation fell apart, *two* gods' names in the documentary sources of the Bible. To

these we add two fresh ones: the foundation of *two* religionsthe first repressed by the second but nevertheless later emerging victoriously behind it, and *two* religious founders, who are both called by the name of Moses and whose personalities we have to distinguish from each other." 68 Through the inner conflict of Indian tradition, the profane duplicity of Orientalist discourse is forced to rediscover its own inescapable unconscious inheritance, violently repressed in the founding monotheistic opposition of the one universal imperialist God to his colonized satanic Other, of man's dialectical essence still enshrined in primitive dualism.69

Notes

1. This article will appear in a longer and modified version, with full sections on "The Perverse Humour of the Infantile Vidusaka: Psychoanalysis, Criminal Law and Sacrificial *Dharma*"(discussing at length the Sanskrit drama, *Mrcchakatika*)and "The Infanticide Ankalamman: The Termite-Mound of the Untouchable Cempatavars and the Royal Obstetrics in the Cremation Ground," in Sunthar and Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam, *Transgressive Sacrality in the Hindu Tradition* (= TSHT), TS Series vol. 1 (Cambridge: Rudra Press).

2. For an elementary introduction to the subject, see my "Transgressive Sacrality in the Hindu Tradition: As a basis of interreligious dialogue, the ethical problem it poses, and its symbolic communication through the buffoon of the Sanskrit drama," originally presented to the Assembly of the World's Religions, 15-21 November 1985 (New York), before serving as the prospectus for the pilot conference on this problematic within the 15th Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin, 8 November 1986 (Madison). It is appearing in TSHT (see n. 1) and also in Serbo-Croat in *Kulture Istoka*,5,No. 17 (Belgrade: July-September, 1988). I am indebted to Alf Hiltebeitel not only for having presided but also for reviewing the proceedings of his own "Criminal gods and Demon Devotees" conference within what I regard to be the more fundamental, global, and immediate problem of transgressive sacrality.

3. Abhinavagupta, citing his relative Vamanagupta, on the semblance of humor and of sorrow in *Abhinavabharatt*.

4. For the continuity between Pasupata and Kapalika praxis, see E. Visuvalingam's section D in this volume (esp. nn. 16 and 60-62).

5. See M. Eliade, *Shamanism*: *Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), xi, 15, 20, 23-32, 365n.

6. S. Kramrisch, *The Presence of Siva* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 159; see n. 22 of E. Visuvalingam's rendering of "The Origin-Myth of Bhairava" in this volume.

7. For the distinction between "sacred" and the repressed "profane" laughter in Amerindian religion, see Lévi-Strauss, "Suppressed Laughter," in *The Raw and the Cooked,*Introduction to a Science of Mythology: vol. 1 (1970; Penguin, 1986), 109, 120-132, which also provides evidence, overlooked by Lévi-Strauss himself, of not only comic behaviour but also tickling serving as symbolic substitutes for transgression in mythology. Otherwise devalorized, (sacred) laughter is nevertheles credited, in myth 45, with the origin of language itself (p. 123, cf. p. 132).

8. L. Renou, *Religions of Ancient India* (London: Univ. of London Athlone Press, 1953), 10, 18; also *L'Inde Fondamentale*,ed. C. Malamoud (Paris: Hermann, 1978), 11-80.

9. See G. Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna*,2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), and especially my treatment of the Gandharva musical symbolism in the Vidusaka Maitreya and the criminal Sakara in the *Mrcchakatika* (see n. 1).

10. See L. Makarius, "Ritual Clowns and Symbolic Behaviour," *Diogenes* no. 69 (Spring 1970).

11. See M. Detienne, "Dionysos orphique et le bouilli rôti," in *Dionysos mis à Mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 163-217; also W. Burkert, *Homo Necans*: *The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983), pp. 89, n. 29; pp. 105, 119, 122-5, 177-8. Cf. J. C. Heesterman's keynote paper on "The Vedic origin of Vegetarianism," delivered to the 15th South Asia Conference (see n. 1) along with his contribution there to the Transgressive Sacrality seminar on "The Notion of Anthropophagy in Vedic Ritual" centered on the consumption of the dionysiac diksita reduced (nowadays) to a he-goat.

12. See D. Lorenzen and especially E. Visuvalingam's section B, both in this volume.

13. See A. Sanderson, "Purity and Power among the Brahmans of Kashmir" in M. Carrithers *et al*.eds., *The Category of the Person*: *Anthropology*, *Philosophy*, *History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 190-216; and "Mandala and Agamic Identity in the *Trika* of Kashmir," *Mantras et Diagrammes Rituels dans l'Hindouisme* (Paris: CNRS, 1986) 169-214.

14. This is also the gist of J.-P. Vernant's treatment of "The Pure and the Impure," in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Sussex: Harvester Press, and New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), 110-29.

15. See J. Parry, "Ghosts, Greed and Sin: The Occupational Identity of the Benares Funeral Priests," in *Man* (NS) 15 (1980), 88-111; "Sacrificial death and the necrophagous ascetic," in M. Bloch and J. P. Parry eds., *Death and the Regeneration of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), and esp. E. Visuvalingam's section F in this volume.

16. See J. Gonda, *Notes on Brahman* (Utrecht: J. L. Beyers, 1950), 16-18, 57-61; and especially L. Renou (and L. Silburn), "Sur la notion *bráhman*,"in *L'Inde*,83116 (see n. 8).

17. See L. Makarius, *Le Sacré et la Violation des Interdits* (Paris: Payot, 1974), 311; C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale*,vol. 2 (Paris: Plon, 1973), 32-34, and *Le Regard Eloigné* (Paris: Plon, 1983), 301-18; with the criticisms of Makarius, *Structuralisme ou Ethnologie*: *Pour une critique radicale de l'anthropologie de Lévi-Strauss* (Paris: Anthropos, 1973), 16-19. See esp. E. Visuvalingam, n. 4 above.

18. See my Ph.D. thesis on "Abhinavagupta's Bisociative Conception of Humour: Its Resonances in Indian Aesthetics, Transgressive Sacrality and Contemporary Indology" (Banaras: Hindu University, 1983).

19. G. Bataille, *L'Erotisme* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1957), 204, subtitle of his chapter on "Sade et l'Homme Normal." See R*gveda* X.129.4, discussed in F. B. J. Kuiper, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*,ed. J. Irwin (Delhi: Vikas, 1983), 131, in terms of (peri- or) pre-natal psycho-analysis.

20. See the pioneering work of F. B. J. Kuiper, *Varuna and Vidusaka*: *On the Origin of the Sanskrit Drama* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Co., 1979), 213-22, to whom I owe my initiation into the embryogonic foundations of Vedic religion. Also G. Dumézil, *Flamen-Brahman* (Paris: Geuthner, 1935), 28-9, seeking to substantiate his argument that the purohita was originally the sacrificial substitute for the king as victim.

21. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*,2nd ed., Govt. Oriental Series (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute), II (1974), p. 1236; IV (1973), pp. 91-2. For the impurity of the diksita bound in Varuna's noose (*mekhala*),see J. C. Heesterman, "Vratya and Sacrifice," *Indo-Iranian Journal* VI (1962), 11-15.

22. H. Hubert and M. Mauss, "Essai sur la Nature et la Fonction du Sacrifice" (1899) reproduced in *Marcel Mauss*: *Oeuvres*,1. *les fonctions sociales du sacré* (Paris: Minuit, 1968), 234; cf. also pp. 225, n. 145; 230ff., 302-5. See E. Visuvalingam in this volume, Section B and n. 28.

23. Kane, II, p. 148, n. 334; p. 131, n. 290; III (1973), p. 612, n. 1161; IV, p. 11, n. 22, where the bhruna, having performed the Soma sacrifices, is ranked even higher than the Srotriya.

24. The duration of which was reckoned from the diksaniya-isti until even the end of the avabhrtha bath; Kane, I, pp. 13, 18, 29, 96; III, p. 527, n. 970. In *Satapatha Brahmana* 1.4.5.13, Atreyi is a menstruating woman identified with the goddess Vac from whom Atri is elsewhere said to have originated, which brings us back a full circle to the eunuch-like Atreya jumbaka. On the mythical level, see E. Visuvalingam, nn. 67, 76, 77, 87, in this volume.

25. Kane, IV, pp. 93, n. 218; 557-8. For the Iranian parallels to this sacrificial embryogony around the Sarasvati as the terrestrial Milky Way, and the transposition of the Vedic astronomical coordinates onto the later Hindu sacred geography, see M. Witzel, "Sur le Chemin du Ciel," *Bulletin d'Études Indiennes* 2 (1984), 213-279. Another penance for Brahmanicide was the pilgrimage to see Rama's bridge (*samudra-setu*)to Lanka (Kane IV, pp. 55, 94), for the Brahman Ravana had mastered the four Vedas. See E. Visuvalingam's section F in this volume.

26. Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1953; rpt. New York: Avon, 1965) is itself profoundly influenced and justified by the invocation of myth, folklore, proverbs, and jokes. See also T. Todorov, "La Rhétorique de Freud," in *Théories du Symbole* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), 285-321.

27. See Knipe's contribution to this volume, where the dead children are also represented by embryonic "ash-fruits" obtained from the snake-anthill temple and from potters. See E. Visuvalingam, nn. 39, 59, 83-4, 109, etc. in this volume, and the longer version of my article (see n. 1) for further examples.

28. *Rgveda* X.72; see Sontheimer in this volume, the source, unless otherwise specified, for all further references to this cult. So striking are the symbolic correspondences between the cult of Martanda-Bhairava and our paradigmatic Asvamedha, that even the *Mrcchakatika*,if not for the classical purification of the (Untouchable) Brahman (Sudraka) himself, could just as well be read as a manual of (not only Indian) tribal religion.

29. Heesterman, "Vratya" (see n. 19) 20-33; and *Inner Conflict of Tradition*: *Essays in Indian Ritual*, *Kingship and Society* (Chicago and London: Chicago Univ. Press, 1985), 37-8, 42, 155 (Vidusaka).

30. See E. Visuvalingam's section I, and nn. 66 and 131, in this volume.

31. Vladimir Propp, "Ritual Laughter in Folklore: A Propos of the Tale of the Princess who would not Laugh, Nesmejana," *Theory and History of Folklore* (Manchester: Univ. of Minnesota, 1984), 124-46, equates the interdiction of laughter with death and obligatory ritual laughter with life, particularly rebirth. For Bataille's transgressive laughter as the mutual imbrication and equilibration of the pulsions of life and death, see D. Pérard, "Rire en majeur," in *L'Interdit et la Transgression*,ed. R. Dorey et al. (Paris: Dunod, 1983), 9-33. For "sardonic" laughter, see S. Reinach, "Le Rire Rituel," *Cultes*, *Mythes*, *Religions*,vol. IV (Paris: 1912), 109-29.

32. This (re-) interpretation of the Kattavarayan narrative is almost wholly based on the data provided by the contributions of Masilamani-Meyer and Shulman in this volume.

33. This mother-son hostility is also central to the Ankalamman cult and its myths; see Eveline Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*: *A Goddess of Tamilnadu*, *Her Myths and Cult*,Beitrage zur Südasienforschung, South Asian Institute, University of Heidelberg, 107 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), *passim*,and n. 27 above.

34. See Biardeau in this volume.

35. See Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari*,34-5: Ankalamman made a net of all the divinities and a copper boat so that her father, their mythic ancestor Malaiyaracan (Parvatarajan) could kill the oppressive demons hiding as fish but, since the fish were jumping back into the sea, she was obliged to open her mouth as wide as the boat in order to swallow the fishes. The net, made with the rope of Yama's noose (= death) and whose top pulled together to trap the fishes

is Visnu's cakra (= womb), is clearly equated with Ankalamman, whose "eyes" (*kan*)form its interstices. Although the fish, like the diksita charged with evil, are Asuras or Raksasas, their assimilation to the fish-tailed Minamaharsi also caught in the net underlines by contrast the positive function and valorization of the diksa.

36. Vallalarajan likewise undergoes his violent embryogonic death so that the Trimurti, incorporating the sacrificial dialectic, may become his slaves. Contrast the treatment of "the Demon Devotee" by D. D. Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*: *Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 317-21, 131-37. See E. Visuvalingam, nn. 68 and 132 in this volume.

37. See E. Visuvalingam's section G in this volume.

38. Virgil, *Aenid*,VII, 312; Freud's motto for his *Traumdeutung*.

39. The incestuous and even parricidal but royal Judas (or king of Syria called Jesus) who expiated by voluntarily substituting himself for Christ on the Cross, in certain Gnostic theories also adopted by Muslim commentators, completes this picture of "the king of kings" as a demon-devotee who dies to become a criminal god. Compare also the double (birth/marriage) incest sacralizing the medieval destiny of the legendary "Pope Gregory" after his (embryogonic?) expiation in a cave on an island in the middle of the ocean. See F. Delpech, "Fragments Hispaniques d'un Discours Incestueux," *Autour des Parentes en Espagne aux XVI et XVII scl*. *Histoire*, *Mythe*, *et Littérature*,A. Redindi, ed. (Paris: Sorbonne, 1987), 91-93, 85ff.

40. E. Visuvalingam, "Adepts of Bhairava in the Hindu Tradition" (in TSHT), also appearing in Serbo-Croat in *Kulture Istoka*,5, No. 17 (see nn. 1 and 2). For more details see Erndl in this volume.

41. See Stanley and Sontheimer in this volume: also the latter's discussion in which the five sheep sacrificed to the anthill Mhaskoba or Khandoba are assimilated to voluntary human sacrifice, and representations of heads of rams and humans alternate under the sandals of Khandoba. The Virasaiva saints of the Lingayats, who nevertheless often served as his temple priests and even established temples for him, were therefore not altogether wrong in rationalizing that it was Siva, and not the demon (Siva-)Mailara, who actually killed Malla. Although (or rather because?) the Torah or Pentateuch formally forbids sacrifices to demons, Dr. Charles Mopsik (letter of 12/02/88) informs me that, during Kippur, the day of collective expiation, a goat is offered to the demoniac power which haunts the mountainous desert, Azazel, himself figured as a goat. See n. 62 below.

42. See G. D. Sontheimer, *Biroba*, *Mhaskoba und Khandoba*: *Ursprung*, *Geschichte und Umwelt von Pastoralen Gottheiten in Maharastra* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1976), 143-47, 246.

43. See Dennis Hudson in this volume.

44. See E. Visuvalingam's section E in this volume (esp. n. 68). Hudson cites archaeological excavations near Kannappa's Kalahasti mountain revealing bones around the Gudimallam lingam, offered to Siva "portrayed on the lingam as an animal sacrificer in the Vedic tradition."

45. See H. Brunner-Lachaux, "De la Consommation du *Nirmalya* de Siva," *Journal Asiatique* (1970), 213-263.

46. Cf. A. Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle*: *Krishna in the Mahabharata* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976), 312. Gomes da Siva, *Pouvoir et Hierarchie* (Bruxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles, in press) has been able to offer a highly successful interpretation of the cult of Jagannatha in the light of a positive utilization of Biardeau's unravelling of the deep-structures of the Hindu mythico-ritual universe, especially of the *Mahabharata*,but in terms of a cyclic regenerative hierarchy founded on the nature/culture (other/self) opposition that does full justice to Dumézil's pioneering tri-functionalism even while conforming to an African model which makes no reference to bhakti. Although to a great extent these necessarily ambiguous structures admit both these and the transgressive perspectives, the crucial criteria for determining the fundamental model would lie in our interpretation of the various "irregular" but insistently recurring details within the bhakti scenario but which bear no direct relevance to or even subtly subvert it. See E. Visuvalingam, n. 30 above.

47. Both the Vallalarajan and the Brahmanicide myths discussed in Meyer, *Ankalaparamecuvari* (pp. 12-14, 50-51, 126, 185-87, 197 for the former and pp. 36-37, 161, 164-65, 178, 274 for the latter) refer back, directly or indirectly, to a former royal cult, far removed from the impure violence of the cremation ground, at the great Siva temple at the foot of the nearby Tiruvannamalai, vestiges of which still persist in the ritual cycle. The Malayanur version of the Vallalan myth identifies him with the historical Hoysala Ballala III who built one of the nine *gopurams* of the Tiruvannamalai temple in the first half of the fourteenth century. According to the *Vallalamakarajan Carittiram* of the *Arunacala-Purana* (Meyer, p. 199; cf. Shulman, *King and the Clown*,331-39), the younger queen of the childless but perfectly virtuous Vallala had to substitute herself for a courtesan to embrace the Lingayat-Siva, who transformed himself into a child and promised, before disappearing, to perform Vallalan's funerary rites and succeed him as his own son. The annual reenthronement of Siva in the absence of a real human king is explicable only in terms of the sacrificial death/ rebirth of the single royal divinity on the model of Jagannatha at Puri, and suggests that the diksa symbolism invested in the historical childless (Siva-) Ballala has been split so as to translate his rebirth from the womb of his own queen into the birth of the so ardently desired son-Siva. See E. Visuvalingam section F (esp. n. 87) in this volume.

48. David Dean Shulman, *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 246-256. For a comparative soteriology of dualistic Saiva Siddhanta and non-dualistic Trika bhakti, see my

contribution on "Are *Tamil Temple Myths* really Tamil: Brahmanical Sacrifice, Tamil *Bhakti* and Hindu Transgressive Sacrality," to the VIth World Tamil Conference-Seminar, Kuala Lumpur, 15-19 November 1987, which is also appearing in the volume referred to in n. 1.

49. M. Biardeau, *L'Hindouisme*: *Anthropologie d'une Civilisation* (Paris: Flammarion, 1981), especially 93-101, is *indispensable* for a proper appreciation of the treatment of bhakti in this concluding paper. See A. Hiltebeitel, "Towards a Coherent Study of Hinduism," in *Religious Studies Review* vol. 9, no.3 (July 1983), 206-211.

50. For the continuity between the classical sacrifice and heterodox renunciation, see J. C. Heesterman, "Brahman: Ritual and Renouncer" (1964), *Inner Conflict* (see n. 29), 26-44.

51. See Waghorne in this volume, and F. B. J. Kuiper, "Cosmogony and Conception: A Query," in Kuiper, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*,90-137 (see n. 19). See my treatment of chapters 2 and 8 of the *Mrcchakatika* in the unabridged version of this essay (see n. 1).

52. By (conditionally) suspending the interdiction, "remission" only deprives the corresponding violation of its transgressive significance which necessarily presupposes the unconditional operation of the taboo. See P. Rieff, "Towards a theory of culture: with special reference to the psychoanalytic case," in T. J. Nossiter *et al*.eds., *Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences*: *Essays in Memory of Peter Nettl* (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 97-108; and "By what authority? Post-Freudian reflections on the repression of the repressive as modern culture," in J. P. Diggins &

M. E. Kann eds., *The Problem of Authority in America* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1981), 225-55.

53. See Makarius, *Le Sacré* (see n. 17), 332-7, esp. p. 341 n. 21, on Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*.

54. See Biardeau, *L'Hindouisme* (see n. 49), 135-171 for the complex relations between bhakti, aesthetics and transgression.

55. See Heesterman, "Brahman" (see n. 50); "Vedic Sacrifice and Transcendence" (81-94); "Ritual, Revelation and the Axial Age" (95-107); in *Inner Conflict* (see n. 29); and "Vratya" (see n. 21), 18-20.

56. See Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths* and *The King and the Clown*;in the latter he "sees no great divide between North and South, and the parallels with the ancient, including even Vedic, patterns are often very striking" (p. 9).

57. Heesterman, "Vratya" (see n. 21), p. 36, n. 103; and especially E. Visuvalingam's section H in this volume.

58. The essential contribution of Mircea Eliade's "phenomenology of religion" is the refusal of all attempts by the "human sciences" to reduce the Sacred to anthropology, psychoanalysis or even linguistics, these countersciences which have converged so admirably in the "archaeology of Man" reduced to his Other by Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock;

New York: Pantheon, 1973).

59. See G. Bataille, *La Part Maudite* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), 127; and *Théories de Religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 78-80, 87-88, for the relation between sacrifice and war in general.

60. The "conflation" (e.g., Jogi Bir) of Brahman, ascetic, heroic, feminine (Sati) and even Muslim traditions in Coccari's contribution to this volume could be more readily seen as a diffraction at the popular level of the transgressive diksa. See E. Visuvalingam's Section F in this volume.

61. See Coccari, Sontheimer, Hiltebeitel and E. Visuvalingam (n. 101 on Ghazi Miya) in this volume. For the projection of the transgressive dimension of Athenian sacrificial ideology onto her Other, the rival sister-city of Thebes, see P. Vidal-Naquet, "Oedipe entre deux cités: Essai sur *l'Oedipe à Colone*,"in J.-P. Vernant & P. V-Naquet, *Mythe et Tragédie* II (Paris: la Découverte, 1986), 175-211.

62. See Hyam Maccoby, *The Sacred Executioner*: *Human Sacrifice and the Legacy of Guilt* (Thames and Hudson, 1982), pp. 35-39, and *passim* for further examples of sacrificial ideology in the Old Testament. Also Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971), p. 198. For Azazel, cf. n. 41 above on the identity of Khandoba and the goat-headed Malla.

63. Further details on Cain and the scapegoat, missing in Maccoby, were also provided by Dr. Charles Mopsik, to whom I express my gratitude for our regular discussions during the Parisian summer of 1988. For Isaac, see Paul B. Fenton, "Le pénitent: Ismaël dans la tradition juive," in *Israel Face aux Nations*: *Figures Juives d'Autrui* (= *Pardès*,7/1988) pp. *50*,56 n. 4. For sacred laughter, see n. 31 above.

64. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, London: Allen Lane; 1977).

65. For the "unspeakable" criminal origins of Yahweh (p. 290: citing *Deuteronomy*,xiii, *15*)and the systematic plagiarism of his Egyptian Revelation, see Freud, "Moses and Monotheism" in *The Origins of Religion*,The Pelican Freud Library, vol. 13 (rpt. Penguin, 1985), 239-386.

66. For the appropriateness of this ridiculous image, see Shulman, *The King and the Clown*,esp. p. 324, who, in his own amusing fashion, explores the transformative relations between this couple, the Untouchable Brahman criminal and the feminine presupposed in our present paper.

67. It is high time that Indologists learnt their lessons from the "terrorist" apropriation of the power of Foucault's discourse in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987). For the archetypal character of this image of man, see W. Willeford, *The Fool and his Sceptre*: *A Study in Clowns and Jesters and their Audience* (London:

Edwin Arnold, 1969).

68. Freud, "Moses and Monotheism," 293. It is, however, not the atheistic founder of psychoanalysis but the "apostate" Jewish Messiah of transgressive

sacrality who, through his "conversion" to Islam, seems to have realized the real implications of this insight into his own historical unconscious. See G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971), 49-77; and especially his *Sabbatai Sévi*: *The Mystical Messiah* (N. Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973). See C. Mopsik, ed., *Transgressive Sacrality in the Jewish Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Rudra Press, forthcoming).

69. See A. Bergaigne, *Vedic Religion* (1978; rpt. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass); Lévi-Strauss *Les Structures Elémentaires de la Parenté* (Paris: Mouton, 1967); G. J. Held, *The Mahabharata*: *An Ethnological Study* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.; Amsterdam: Uitgeversmaatschappij; 1935); and Gomes da Silva, *Pouvoir et Hierarchie* (see n. 46). We may now look forward to W. D. O'Flaherty's structural analysis of "Jewish scholars and Indian Studies" in *Between Jerusalem and Benares*.

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Contributors

Madeleine Biardeau is Professor at the École des Hautes Études, 5th Section, Sorbonne, Paris. She has recently published two volumes of extracts from the *Mahabharata*,translated into French with a running commentary. Forthcoming is her *Histoire de poteaux*: *variations védiques autour de la Déesse*.She is now working on the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* from a comparative standpoint.

Elizabeth-Chalier Visuvalingam received a (double) Ph.D. in Ethnology and Comparative Sociology from the University of Nanterre, Paris-X (1981), and in Sanskrit and Indian Religion from Banaras Hindu University (1983), with her work on "The Significance of Unmatta-Bhairava in the Hindu Tradition." She is currently preparing a French "thèse d'état" on "The Cult of Bhairava in North India and Nepal" as a member of two research groups (E.R. 249 and 299) attached to the National Center for Scientific Research.

Diane M. Coccari completed her dissertation on "The Bir Babas of Banaras: An Analysis of a Folk Deity in North Indian Hinduism" (1986), and has written several related articles. She is currently teaching language and religion as a Faculty Assistant at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Kathleen M. Erndl is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Lewis and Clark College and has taught at the University of Wisconsin and DePauw University. She is the author of several articles on the goddess cult of northwest India.

Alf Hiltebeitel is Professor of Religion at the George Washington University, Washington, D.C. His publications include *The Ritual of Battle*: *Krishna in the Mahabharata* (1976) and *The Cult of Draupadi*, *I*. *Mythologies*: *From Gingee to*

Kuruksetra (1988), the first volume of a three-part study.

D. Dennis Hudson is Professor in the Department of Religion and Biblical Studies, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. Confining his research and writing to the Tamil regions of India and Sri Lanika he has published articles on Indian Christians, *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* temple festivals, Vaisnava theology and tradition, and Indian responses to the West. His current work includes studies in Vaisnava temples, Hindu lives of the saints, poems of the saints in their cultic contexts, and Hindu responses to Christian missions.

David M. Knipe is Professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and also Chair of Religious Studies. He is the author of *In the Image of Fire* (1975) and several articles on myths, rituals, and traditional medicine. A book on Hinduism is forthcoming.

David N. Lorenzen is Professor and Research Scholar in the Center of Asian and African Studies of El Colegio de Mexico and chief editor of *Estudios de Asia y Africa*.He has written a book on *The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas* (1972), articles on Saivism and on the Kabir Panth, and several Spanish translations of Sanskrit works including Krsnamisra's *Prabodhacandrodaya* (1984). He is currently working on a book on the Kabir Panth and a translation of Anantadas' sixteenth century Hindi text, the *Kabir paracai*.

Eveline Masilamani-Meyer completed her Ph.D. at Heidelberg University with a study of the goddess Anikalamman, now published as *AnkalaparamecuvariA Goddess of Tamilnadu*, *Her Myths and Cult* (1986). She is now working on a study and translation of the *Kattavarayan Katai* and on guardian deities of Tamilnadu.

Velcheru Narayana Rao is Associate Professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He is a published poet in Telugu, the author of several articles on Telugu literature, and of a forthcoming translation of the life of the Lingayat reformer Basava. Most recently he has been working on Telugu folk epics and riddles.

David Dean Shulman is Professor of Indian Studies and Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. He is the author of *Tamil Temple Myths* (1980), *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry* (1985), and of various studies on aspects of Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu literature and culture.

Günther D. Sontheimer is Professor at the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg and teaches South Asian Religions, traditional law (*dharmasastra*)and Marathi language and literature.

His publications include *The Hindu Joint Family*: *Its Evolution as a Legal Institution* (1977), *Biroba*, *Mhaskoba und Khandoba* (Wiesbaden, 1976), and *Memorial Stones* (ed. with S. Settar, Dharwad/New Delhi, 1982).

John M. Stanley is the Ellen Sabin Professor of Comparative Religions and Ethics at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. His publications on popular religions in Maharashtra include articles and chapters on pilgrimages, festivals, spirit possession and exorcism, and myth and ritual patterns.

Sunthar Visuvalingam received his Ph.D. in Sanskrit and (Indian) Philosophy from the Banaras Hindu University (1983) with his work on "Abhinavagupta's Conception of Humour: Its Resonances in Sanskrit Drama, Poetry, Hindu Mythology and Spiritual Praxis." He is currently preparing a French "thèse d'état" on "The Semiotics of the Vidusaka: The Ideology of Transgression in Brahmanical India," and also editing three volumes on Aesthetics, Philosophy, and Religion in a series on *Abhinavagupta and the Synthesis of Indian Culture*.

Joanne Punzo Waghorne has taught, researched, and published on religion in modern India for the last ten years. Her work includes a book on C. Rajagopalachari, *Images of Dharma*,an anthology edited with Norman Cutler, *Gods of Flesh/Gods of Stone*,articles on methodology in the history of religions, and a recently completed manuscript on sacral kingship in the former princely state of Pudukkottai. Following a year of new research in Madras in 1986-87, she joined the Department of Religious Studies, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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